Middle Land Middle Way

A Pilgrim's Guide to the Buddha's India

Ven. S. Dhammika

Middle Land, Middle Way

A Pilgrim's Guide to the Buddha's India

Middle Land, Middle Way

A Pilgrim's Guide to the Buddha's India

Venerable S. Dhammika

Buddhist Publication Society
54 Sangharaja Mawatha
PO Box 61
Kandy
Sri Lanka
http://www.bps.lk

First edition: 1992
Second revised edition: 1999
Third revised edition: 2008

ISBN 10: 955-24-0197-6
ISBN 13: 978-955-24-0197-8

National Library of Sri Lanka–Cataloguing in Publication Data

Rev. Dhammika, S.
Middle Land Middle Way: A pilgrim's guide to the Buddha's India/ Rev. S. Dhammika.-ed. by Rev. Nyanatusita.—Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society Inc., 2008.
p.192:ill. ; 22cm

ISBN 955-24-0197-6 Price:

i. 294.34350954 DDC 21 ii. Title
iii. Rev. Nyanatusita – ed.
1. Sacred Places in India

Photographs provided by Bhikkhu Dhammajoti, S. Dhammika, Ken Kawasaki, Ulpotkanda Aranya. Selected, arranged and explained by Bhīkkhu Nyanatusita.

Printed by

Contents

Introduction ... 1
- Hints for pilgrims ... 29
- Lumbinī ... 33
- Kapilavatthu ... 39
- Bodh gayā ... 46
- Gayā ... 73
- Pragbodhi ... 76
- Sārnāth ... 77
- Rājagaha ... 90
- Nālandā ... 109
- Patna ... 117
- Campā ... 122
- Vesālī ... 128
- Kesariya ... 134
- Kosambī ... 136
- Madhurā ... 142
- Gurpa ... 145
- Lauriya nandangar ... 148
- Barabar and kaudol hills ... 152
- Sāvatthī ... 156
- Kusināra ... 169
- Don ... 174

Abbreviations ... 177

Notes ... 178

Bibliography ... 181

Description of Plates ... 183

INTRODUCTION

Ānanda, there are four places the sight of which will arouse strong emotion in those with faith. Which four places? 'Here the Tathāgata was born'—this is the first. 'Here the Tathāgata attained enlightenment'—this is the second. 'Here the Tathāgata set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma' —this is the third. 'Here the Tathāgata attained final Nirvana without remainder' —this is the fourth. And the monk, the nun, the layman or the laywoman who has faith should visit these places. And anyone who dies while making a pilgrimage to these shrines with a devoted heart will, at the breaking up of the body at death, be reborn in heaven.[1]

The land we today call India was known to the Buddha and his contemporaries as the Rose-apple Continent (*Jambudīpa*). Speaking of this land in which he was born the Buddha said: 'Few in number are pleasant parks, pleasant groves, pleasant stretches of land and lakes, while more numerous are the steep rugged places, unfordable rivers, dense thickets of scrub and thorns and inaccessible mountains.'[2] But despite its dry climate and harsh environment, India, along with Egypt, China and Mesopotamia, was one of the great cradles of human civilization. It was in the central Ganges valley in particular, or what was called the Middle Land (*Majjhima Desa*), that many of Indian civilization's greatest ideas and innovations sprang up. The Buddha was born in the Middle Land and spent his whole life walking its dusty roads, meditating in its forests and teaching in its cities, towns and villages. He considered it a distinct advantage to be born in the Middle Land and it probably was at that time.[3] The Middle Land nurtured Buddhism during its first crucial centuries, and although the Dhamma soon spread all over India and eventually beyond its borders to distant parts of Asia, Buddhists have always looked to this land as the home of their religion.

The extent of the Middle Land is very precisely defined in the ancient Buddhist scriptures. In the *Vinaya* we are told that it extended in the east to the town of Kajangala, in the south-east to the Salalavati River, in the south-west to the town of Satakannika, in the west to the brahmin village of Thūna, and its northern borders were marked by the Usiraddhaja Mountains.[4] Most of these landmarks cannot be identified today, but the Middle Land of the ancient Buddhists corresponds roughly to the modern Indian states of Bihār and Uttar Pradesh and the Tarai of Nepal.

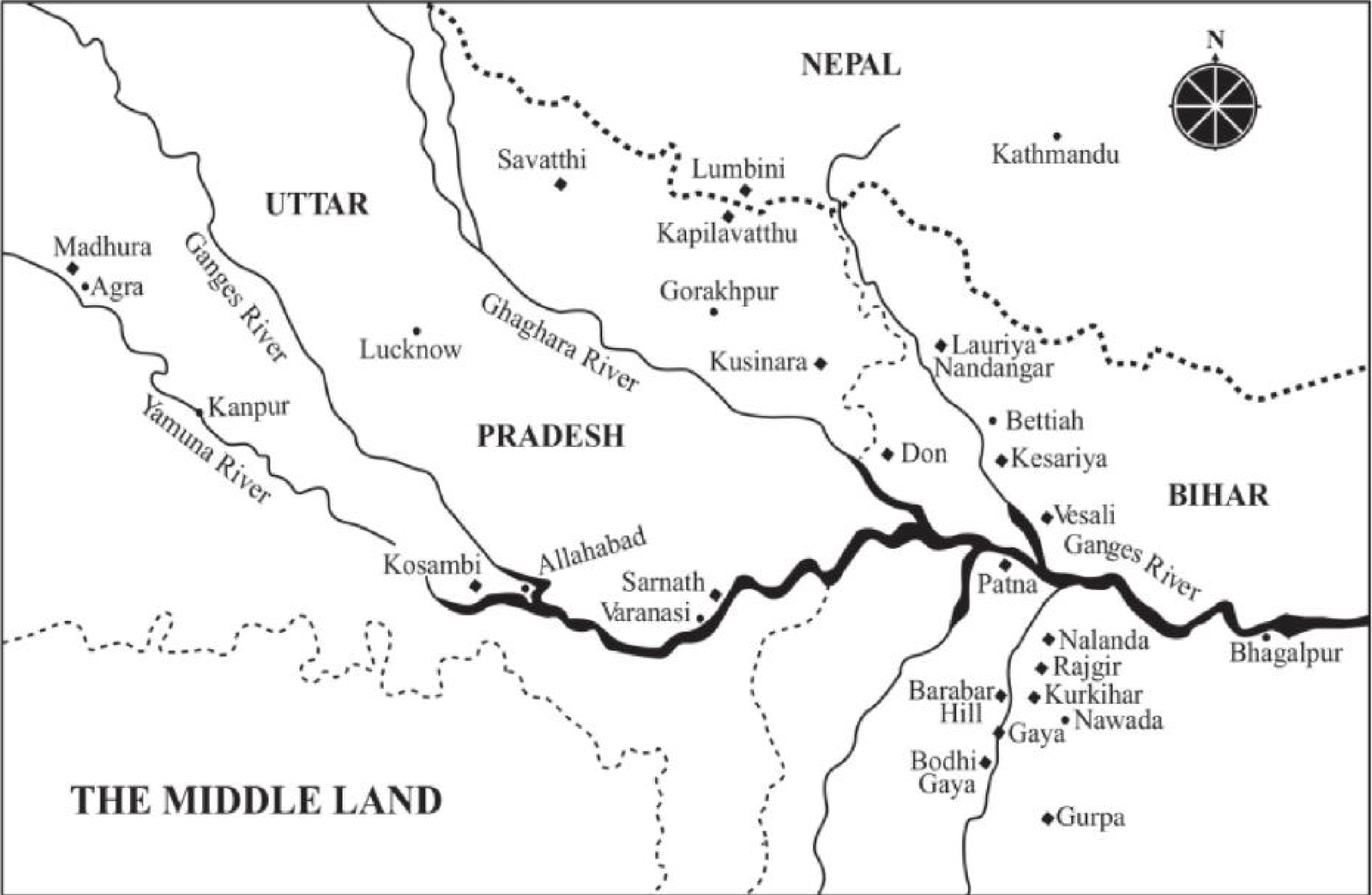
Politically, the India the Buddha knew was divided into 16 countries (*mahājanapada*), several of which he lived in or traveled through during

his long and successful career. The most important of these countries was Magadha, which was ruled by King Bimbisāra and later, during the last years of the Buddha's life, by his son Ajātasattu. Some years after the Buddha's final Nirvana, the capital of Magadha was moved from Rājagaha to Patna and the country embarked on a policy of expansion. By the 3rd century BCE, Magadha had conquered almost all of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. To the east of Magadha was Anga, a small kingdom on the banks of the Ganges that was annexed to Magadha during King Bimbisāra's reign. The capital of Anga was Campā. Magadha's main rival to the north-west was Kosala with its capital at Sāvatthī and during the Buddha's life both countries went to war with each other several times. The Buddha spent most of the last 20 years of his life in Kosala and the king, Pasenadi, was one of his most devoted disciples. To the north of Magadha was Vajjī, a confederacy of several tribes, the most important of which were the Licchavis and the Videhas. By the Buddha's time the Licchavis had become the dominant tribe and their chief city, Vesālī, had become the *de facto* capital of the confederacy. In the last year of the Buddha's life the king of Magadha was already making plans to invade Vajjī.[5]

Wedged between Kosala and Vajjī was the Sakyan country, the Buddha's homeland. Although nominally independent the Sakyans were under the influence of their larger and more powerful neighbor to the west and we read in the Tipitaka that 'the Sakyans are vassals of the king of Kosala, they offer him humble service and salutation, do his bidding and pay him honor.'[6] Just before the Buddha's final Nirvana the Sakyan country was conquered by Kosala after a swift and bloody campaign.

Occasionally, the Buddha would visit Kāsī which once held sway over much of the Middle Land but by his time had become politically insignificant. However, despite its waning political fortunes Vārānasi, the capital of Kāsī, remained and continues to be even today an important center of religion, culture and trade. Before the Buddha renounced the world he used only perfume and silk brocade that came from Vārānasi, two products that the city is still famous for.[7] Further west of Kāsī and to the south of Kosala was Vamsā which was ruled by King Udena during much of the Buddha's lifetime. The capital Kosambī was on the Yamunā and was visited by the Buddha on several occasions.

Being as it is the sacred land of Buddhism, the Middle Land has inspired pilgrims throughout the centuries to overcome enormous obstacles and to risk their lives to see the places associated with the Buddha. They have come from all directions of India, from China, Korea, Sumatra, Burma and Sri Lanka. We know of at least one pilgrim who came all the way from what is now Kazakhstan in the former Soviet Union, which was then a predominantly Buddhist region. Pilgrims who came from China or Korea had to cross the fearful Taklamakan Desert and then climb over some of the highest mountain ranges in the world. Alternatively, they could come by ship, spending months at sea risking


N
NEPAL
Kathmandu
Savatthi
Lumbini
Kapilavatthu
UTTAR
Madhura
Agra
Ganges River
Gorakhpur
Lucknow
Ghaghara River
Kusinara
Lauriya Nandangar
Kanpur
Yamuna River
PRADESH
Bettiah
Don
Kesariya
BIHAR
Vesali
Ganges River
Kosambi
Allahabad
Sarnath
Varanasi
Patna
Nalanda
Rajgir
Kurkihar
Nawada
Bhagalpur
Barabar Hill
Gaya
Bodhi Gaya
Gurpa
THE MIDDLE LAND

storms, pirates and sickness. Pilgrims coming from Sri Lanka, Sumatra or Java would have to take a ship into the Bay of Bengal to the port of Tamralipti (now Tamluk near Kharagpur in West Bengal), proceed up the Ganges as far as Patna and from there continue on foot. For those coming from Nepal and Tibet, it was not distance but climate that was the greatest obstacle. Descending from the cool clean air of their mountain homelands to the hot dusty atmosphere of the Middle Land often meant sickness or even death for these travelers. According to Shes-bya-kun-khyab, the first Tibetan to go to India was Akaramatisīla who was sent by King Srong-btsan-sgam-po to get a statue of Avalokitesvara. On the way back he stopped in Bodh Gayā to collect leaves from the Bodhi Tree and sand from the Nerañjarā River.

There is only one record of a pilgrim coming from Thailand to the Middle Land in ancient times. The monk, whose name is not known, went by foot through Fong and Lumpun in Northern Thailand into Burma and from there to India.[8] The famous Kalyāni Inscriptions mention a Burmese monk of the 13th century who was able to take advantage of the powers he had developed in meditation to make regular visits to Bodh Gayā:

> 'Being thus endowed, he would, every morning, proceed to Magadha and sweep the courtyard of the Bodhi tree in Uruvelā, return to Suddhammapura (Pegu in lower Burma) and go on his alms-round. One morning, while he was sweeping the courtyard of the Bodhi Tree, certain traders who lived in Uruvelā and were on their way to Magadha from Pegu, saw him, and, on their return, related what they had seen to the people of Pegu.'

However, most pilgrims coming from Burma came over the An Pass to Arakan and then either went by foot along the coast up into Bengal, or took a boat through the steamy pirate-infested waterways of the Sundarbans and then sailed up the Ganges.

Of the many who set out, a large number never returned, and some never even managed to get to the Middle Land. The Chinese monk Chang Min was one such pilgrim:

> 'His aim was to reach mid-India. Accordingly, he boarded a cargo ship carrying heavy merchandise. The ship left the shore but could not make headway due to a sudden typhoon that lashed the region and made the sea very rough and turbulent. Within an hour the ship began to sink, and in great confusion and panic the sailors and merchants on the ship began scrambling for accommodation on the smaller accompanying boat. The captain of the ship was a follower of the Buddha, and when he had got into the smaller boat he called to the monk Chang Min to join him there. But the monk replied: "Take someone else in my place. I will not go." For

the sake of others, he did not join them.' Chang Min calmly sat chanting as the ship sank.

Some pilgrims made it to their destination but never lived to see their homelands again. In the second half of the 15th century a Sri Lankan monk named Dharmadīpankara went on a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā and then decided to travel to Nepal, Tibet and China. He survived this long grueling journey, but then died in India while on his way home.

Even if they managed to reach the Middle Land, pilgrims still faced the considerable hardships that the unhealthy climate, the not infrequent political strife, and the long deserted roads offered. We read of a Korean pilgrim named Hsuan K'o who made it all the way to Bodh Gayā only to die a few days after his arrival. Another pilgrim, the Chinese monk I Tsing, had an encounter with robbers and barely escaped to tell the tale. Even while his life was threatened, this pious monk's only concern was that he might not be able to complete his pilgrimage. 'I thought at that time, indeed, that my last farewell to the world was at hand and that I would not be able to fulfil my wish to visit the holy places.' Some intrepid individuals actually managed to make two or even three journeys to the Middle Land. The Chinese monk Huien Chi first went to India in 628 CE through far western China and Afghanistan, staying at Bodh Gayā and Nālandā for four and three years respectively, eventually returning through Tibet. Eighteen years later he went again but when he tried to return home political strife in Tibet and also in north-west India made travel impossible, so he decided to spend the rest of his days in the land that was far from his home but close to his heart.

But those who successfully completed a pilgrimage and returned home safely, did so with their faith stronger than ever and the knowledge that they had walked where the Buddha had walked gave them a joy that remained with them all their lives. Few pilgrims who went to the Middle Land left accounts of their journeys but the records that survived are testimony to the triumph of faith and devotion over physical obstacles. To set out on a pilgrimage required patience, courage, faith and a cheerful disregard for hardships and those who returned home found these qualities strengthened. It is probably for this reason that the Buddha urged his followers to visit Lumbinī (birth), Bodh Gayā (enlightenment), Sārnāth (first teaching) and Kusināra (passing away) at least once in their life. For several centuries these four places were the main centers of pilgrimage. But as Buddhism began to flourish and as going on pilgrimage became increasingly popular, more places associated with the Buddha's life began to be visited. The *Asokāvadāna,* composed sometime in the 2nd century CE, names thirty-two such places.

After the virtual disappearance of Buddhism in India in the 13th century, the shrines and temples of the Middle Land were deserted. The jungle swallowed up some, others were converted into Hindu temples, and the very whereabouts of most of them were forgotten. This, together

with the successive Muslim dynasties that ruled northern India, made pilgrimage to the Middle Land almost impossible for nearly 600 years. But starting in the last half of the 19th century, Buddhist shrines began to be rediscovered and restored and slowly pilgrims began to return although even at that time traveling through the Middle Land was still an adventure.

In 1896 a Thai monk named Phra Mahā Chandrima visited the main sacred places and then wrote a *Guide to the Sacred Sites of the Buddhistic Holy Land* for the benefit of those who might follow him. This little guide makes fascinating reading and some of its details might be worth remembering when the modern pilgrim has to wait for a delayed train or is overcharged by a rickshaw driver. It took Chandrima four days to get from Gorakapur to Lumbinī; he had to walk the whole way. The train from Gayā to Nawada cost him 7 annas 9 paice and the bullock cart from there to Rājagaha another 3 rupees. The fare from Balrāmpur (Sāvatthī) back to Kolkata cost him 6 rupees 2 anna and required changing trains twice. He did not give any details on accommodation, probably because there was none. At the end of his little guide Phra Chandrima expressed a sentiment commonly felt by those who have completed a pilgrimage. 'I share with the reader the merit I gained by worshipping those holy places ... May the reader be delighted with the thought of those holy places.'

It is considerably easier to go on a pilgrimage to the Middle Land today than it was in the past but the rewards are just as great. To see the lotus, that beautiful flower which the Buddha so often used as a simile in his discourses, as they bloom in the wet-season pools and muddy village ponds, can be a very evocative experience. To encounter wandering ascetics begging for alms in crowded streets much as they did at the Buddha's time can be a powerful reminder of the eternal human quest for spiritual fulfillment. The author once encountered an old peasant woman bent at right-angles by age, a diseased beggar by the side of the road, a funeral procession and a wandering ascetic all within a few hours, just as Prince Siddhattha had once done. Such experiences can add a new and dramatic dimension to one's understanding of the Dhamma. But more than this, to sit in meditation or to make offerings at the places where the Buddha lived and taught is to experience a definite spiritual presence which can be felt despite the bustle, the noise and the buying and selling that characterize any place of pilgrimage. This spiritual presence can invigorate the pilgrim's faith and practice long after he or she returns home.

To fully appreciate a journey to the Middle Land the modern pilgrim needs to have some idea about the religious, historical and archaeological background of each of the sacred places. Much of the history of these places is derived from accounts written by pilgrims who visited them in ancient times, and as we will make frequent references to some of these

pilgrims, it will be useful to know something about their lives. Likewise, some knowledge of the types of monuments the pilgrim is likely to see as well as of the different eras and styles in Buddhist art will also enrich his or her understanding.

PILGRIMS

Asoka

Even before the Buddha's final Nirvana in 483 BCE, people must have been visiting places where the important events in his life occurred. However, the first historical record we have of someone going on a pilgrimage is about the great Indian emperor, Asoka, or as he always referred to himself, Piyadasi, Beloved of the Gods. When he was crowned in 270 BCE, becoming the third emperor of the Mauryan dynasty, he inherited a vast empire that stretched from Afghanistan to Bangladesh and included all of India except the southernmost tip and the present day state of Orissa, then known as Kalinga. A war of succession preceded his coronation, during which Asoka had several of his brothers killed.

Eight years later he embarked on a war of expansion against Kalinga during which, in his own words: 'One hundred and fifty thousand were deported, one hundred thousand were killed, and many more died from other causes.' The realization of what he had done deeply shocked Asoka and brought about a change in him which was to have a profound effect upon his style of government and, in particular, upon Buddhism. He became a devout Buddhist and then did his best to govern his empire according to Buddhist principles. He gave up an expansionist foreign policy, reformed the administration and judicial systems, took positive steps to promote harmony between different religions, introduced medical herbs into areas where they were unavailable, and banned the hunting of many species of wildlife. But of all his innovations, it was his efforts to spread Buddhism that had the most enduring effect. He held the Third Buddhist Council in his capital at Patna, united the Sangha, and then sent experienced teaching monks to all parts of India and as far away as Syria, Egypt and Macedonia. The most successful of these foreign missions was the one headed by his son, the monk Mahinda, who was sent to Sri Lanka.

Legend also says that Asoka opened seven of the eight stupas that were built over the Buddha's ashes, divided the relics into 84,000 portions, and built stupas over each portion. Although this number is an obvious exaggeration, there is no doubt that many of the stupas in India were first built during the Mauryan period. In one of his inscriptions Asoka tells us that he had given up the usual kingly habit of going on pleasure trips and had instead started going on pilgrimages, or what he called Dhamma tours. In 260 BCE Asoka went on pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā and

ten years later to Lumbinī.

The modern pilgrim can still see Asoka's influence in the Middle Land, and indeed in many places throughout India, in the huge pillars he erected. These pillars were used to record the edicts he issued during his 38 years' reign, to mark various sacred sites, and also to mark the pilgrim's route from his capital at Patna to Lumbinī. They stand today bearing silent witness to the aesthetic and technological genius of the ancient Indians. Although some of these pillars are now broken, the tallest are up to 15 meters high, and all of them exhibit a remarkably high polish that still remains even after centuries of exposure to the elements. Each was crowned with a capital, sometimes a noble bull or a spirited lion, some of which are recognized as masterpieces of Indian art. All of the pillars were made in the Chunar quarries south of Vārānasi and from there were dragged sometimes hundreds of kilometers to where they were raised.

Fa Hien

The first of what was later to become a flood of pilgrims coming from China was the monk Fa Hien. Anxious to obtain authentic copies of Buddhist texts and to visit the sacred places in India, Fa Hien and three companions set out in 399 CE on what was to be one of the truly great travel adventures in history. Speaking no language but their own, with meager resources and knowing only that India lay vaguely somewhere in the west, Fa Hien and his companions had nothing to guide or sustain them but their faith. Crossing the fearful Taklamakan desert, the only thing that marked the way was the parched bones of less lucky travelers. The pilgrims passed through the oasis town of Khotan, crossed the Hindu Kush mountain range, and eventually arrived in Peshawar where they marveled at the great stupa built by King Kaniskha, probably the tallest building in the ancient world. By the time they reached the Middle Land, two of the pilgrims had already died, leaving only Fa Hien and his friend Tao Ching to continue on together. They visited monasteries, temples and places associated with the life of the Buddha throughout the Middle Land. For three years they stayed in Patna, 'learning Sanskrit books and language and copying out Vinaya texts.'

When it was time to move on, Tao Ching told Fa Hien that he wished to remain in the land where the good Dhamma was understood and practiced so well, and so sorrowfully, Fa Hien continued on alone. He spent another two years in Tamralipti copying out more texts and then took a merchant ship down the east coast to Sri Lanka. As in India, Fa Hien found Buddhism in the island flourishing and he was able to acquire copies of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and other texts unknown in China at that time. One day, while visiting a temple, he saw a worshipper offering a Chinese-made fan on the shrine. He had been away from China for many years now, and suddenly memories of

his beloved homeland flooded into his mind and tears filled his eyes. It was time to go home. Shortly after, he embarked on a ship with 200 other passengers heading for Java. Two days out of port, a storm blew up and the ship sprang a leak. The passengers and crew began throwing cargo overboard in an effort to save the ship. Fa Hien threw his personal possessions into the sea in the hope that the crew would not demand that he surrender up the precious books he had spent so many years collecting. He implored Avalokitesvara not to let him die after he had already come so far, endured so many hardships and survived so many dangers. The storm blew for thirteen days and eventually they landed on an island, repaired the ship, and then continued on their way.

Fa Hien stayed in Java for five months and found Hinduism to be the main religion of the people although there were some Buddhists. Embarking on another ship with two hundred other passengers and provisions for fifty days, he again continued on his homeward journey. After being at sea for about a month, the ship was hit by a storm and after conferring with the others, the brahmins on board said: 'It is because we have this ascetic on the ship that we have no luck and encounter trouble. Come; let us land this monk on the first island we come to. Let not all of us perish for the sake of one.' At this critical moment, a Buddhist passenger who had befriended Fa Hien spoke up: 'If you land this monk, you had better either land me also or kill me. Because if you put this monk ashore, when I arrive in China, I will go straight to the emperor and report you. And the emperor has great faith in the Buddha's Dhamma and greatly honors monks.' This threat silenced the crew, but the rest of the journey must have been an anxious one for poor Fa Hien. When he arrived back in China in 474 CE, he had been away altogether for 14 years. He wrote an account of his epic journey and spent the rest of his life translating the books he had brought back with him, finally dying in his 88th year.

Fa Hien was not only a courageous traveler, he was also a person whose modesty, truthfulness, naive innocence and deep faith in the Three Jewels made him loved by all who knew him. A fellow monk reminisced on the impression Fa Hien left on the inmates in the monastery where he lived in these words:

> 'It was at the end of the summer retirement in the twelfth year of the era of Yi Hsi of the Tsin Dynasty in the year 416 that we welcomed the Venerable Fa Hien. While he remained with us, preaching, we questioned him again and again about his travels and we found that he was an unassuming, affable man who answered truthfully. We therefore urged him to give a more detailed account of what he had previously narrated so briefly. Thus he related his story once more from beginning to end. "When I look back on what I have been through," he said, "my heart begins to

pound and I start to sweat. I risked all those dangers with no thought for myself, because I had a fixed purpose and, simple as I am, was single-minded. That is why I embarked upon a journey in which death seemed almost certain, and I had one chance only in ten thousand of surviving." We were moved by what he said. Such men as this are rare whether in ancient times or at the present day. Since the Great Religion traveled east, there has been no one to equal Fa Hien in his selfless search for the Dhamma. From this we may know that all things are possible to the sincere of heart, and all things can be accomplished if a man has determination. For is it not true that he succeeded because he disregarded what others value, and valued what others disregarded?'

Huien Tsiang

The first Chinese pilgrim to go to India inspired by Fa Hien's example was the famous monk Huien Tsiang. He was born into a religious family in 604 CE, and obtained permission to become a monk while still a child. By his early 20's he had gained a reputation for wide learning, and at the age of twenty-six he had already resolved to go to India to collect Buddhist texts, to study the Dhamma from Indian masters, and to visit the sacred places. He applied to the imperial court for permission to leave China, and when it was refused he decided to go in secret. By the time he had reached the far western border regions of China, his horse had already died and the two monks who were accompanying him were beginning to express grave doubts about the journey and to talk about going back. When the governor of the region told Huien Tsiang of the terrain that lay ahead, his heart sank, his two companions left him, and he remained in Kwa-chow for a whole month wondering what to do. Then an official order arrived informing the governor that a monk was attempting to leave China and if found he was to be arrested and sent back. The governor asked Huien Tsiang if he was the person mentioned in the order and when he said he was, the governor, who was a deeply religious Buddhist, said to the downcast monk: 'Since the Master is indeed capable of such a project, I will, for his sake, destroy the document,' and then and there he tore it up before him. 'And now, sir,' he said, 'you must go quickly.'

After crossing the desert, he passed through Tashkent in what is today Kazakhstan, Bamiyan, Kabul, Peshawar and Lahore in modern Afghanistan and Pakistan. He found Buddhism flourishing in all these places, and finally after overcoming incredible hardships and danger, he arrived in the Middle Land. But even as he visited the sacred places, he still had to contend with danger. On one occasion, after visiting Ayudhya, the boat in which he was travelling down the river was attacked by pirates. They towed the boat to shore and searched the terrified passengers for valuables. The pirates were devotees of the Hindu goddess, Durga,

and on seeing Huien Tsiang's fair color decided that he would make a suitable sacrifice to the goddess. When the frightened monk realized what their intentions were, he tried to talk the pirates out of it: 'If this poor and defiled body of mine is indeed suitable for the sacrifice you propose, I, in truth, dare not grudge it, but as my intention in coming from a distance was to pay reverence to the image of Bodhi and the Gijjhakūta Mountain, and to inquire as to the character of the sacred books and the Dhamma, and as this purpose has not yet been accomplished, if you, my noble benefactors, kill this body of mine, I fear it will bring you misfortune.'

The pirates took no notice of Huien Tsiang's words, and even the pleas for mercy from the other passengers would not deter them from this course. As the poor monk composed himself for his end, a sudden violent wind blew up, knocking down some nearby trees and whipping up the dust. The superstitious pirates took this to be an ill omen, and Huien Tsiang and the other passengers were released, and much relieved, were allowed to continue on their journey.

Eventually, Huien Tsiang arrived at Nālandā and settled down to five years of study and teaching (635–640 CE) during which he visited Bodh Gayā and other parts of India from time to time. His profound learning earned him the respect of the other students and teachers, and they were loath to let him go when he finally announced his intention to return to China. All the monks hearing of it came to him in a body and begged him to remain. Unable to dissuade him, the monks took Huien Tsiang to his teacher, Sīlabhadra, who likewise asked him why he wanted to leave. Huien Tsiang answered eloquently and movingly:

> 'This country is the place of the Buddha's birth; it is impossible not to regard it with affection. Huien Tsiang's only intention in coming hither was to inquire after the good Dhamma for the benefit of his fellow creatures. Since my arrival here, you, sir, have condescended on my account to explain the *Yogacārabhūmi Sāstra* and to investigate doubtful passages. I have visited and worshipped at the sacred places of our religion and heard the expositions of the different schools. My mind has been overjoyed and my visit here has, I protest, been of the utmost profit. I desire now to go back and translate and explain to others what I have heard so as to cause others also to be equally grateful to you, with myself, in hearing and understanding these things; and for this reason I am unwilling to delay my return and remain here.'

Sīlabhadra was overjoyed with this reply and ordered the monks to help Huien Tsiang prepare for the long journey that lay before him. He had arrived in India ragged and alone, and now he set out to return the way he had come loaded up with priceless books, relics, and Buddha statues, mounted on an elephant and sent on his way by crowds of

friends and admirers. The journey was uneventful except for the death of Huien Tsiang's elephant, and also an incident in which all the books were nearly lost while crossing the Indus.

When he reached the borders of China, Huien Tsiang sent a messenger forward to the imperial court to announce his arrival. When he arrived at Loyang, huge crowds turned out to see his entry into the city. He was mildly reprimanded by the emperor for leaving the country without permission and then was feted like no monk had ever been before. He had been away for fifteen years and returned with six hundred and fifty seven books, carried upon twenty horses, and he had amazing stories to tell about the many things he had seen and the many adventures he had experienced. At the request of the emperor, Huien Tsiang wrote an account of his pilgrimage, a book so detailed and full of facts that it remains to this day one of the most important sources of information about Central Asia and India during the 7th century. Huien Tsiang spent the remainder of his life translating the books he had brought back from India, twenty four works altogether, and finally died peacefully in 664 CE.

Dharmasvāmin

Perhaps the last pilgrim to see the sacred places in India before their destruction in the 13th century was the Tibetan monk Dharmasvāmin. Buddhists from Tibet had been coming to the Middle Land on pilgrimage and to study for several centuries but Dharmasvāmin seems to be the only one who left an account of his journey, the details of which he gave to his biographer, the layman Chos-dar. As well as mastering Buddhist doctrine, Dhamasvāmin had studied medicine, sculpture and architecture. His biographer tells us that so great was his love of learning that 'between the ages of seventeen and forty five, he had made a vow not to separate himself from his pen and ink.' Before leaving Tibet to study at Svayambhu stupa in Nepal, Dharmasvāmin had also made a vow not to return to his homeland until he had also made a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā. After finishing an eight-year course of study, he announced his intentions to go to India. His fellow monks tried to dissuade him, telling him that to undertake such a journey was to risk one's life, but his teacher encouraged him, saying: 'There will be no danger even if you do go to India. We, father and son (i.e. teacher and disciple) shall meet again.'

And so in 1234 CE, at the age of 37, Dharmasvāmin set off for the Middle Land. The whole country was in chaos at that time; the Muslim invaders had destroyed the existing administration and had still not replaced it with one of their own. Bands of robbers and groups of marauding soldiers greedy for loot made lonely roads and even the towns and cities dangerous. Dharmasvāmin joined a party of three hundred

traders, sixteen of whom, like himself, were headed for Bodh Gayā. Eventually Dharmasvāmin reached his destination, only to have to flee straight away to avoid an expected attack. He returned when the danger was over and spent some three months meditating, worshipping, seeing the sights and, being able to speak Sanskrit, acting as an interpreter for groups of visiting monks.

After his stay at Bodh Gayā, Dharmasvāmin visited Rājagaha and then Nālandā, where he studied with the great scholar Rāhula Sri Bhadra, who was then ninety years old and abbot of the great monastery. But the quiet studious atmosphere of Nālandā was soon to be brutally shattered. Muslim soldiers had already sacked the monastic university of Odantapuri, one day's march north of Nālandā, and were now using it as a base for their raids. A disciple of Rāhula Sri Bhadra had been detained by the soldiers, but had managed to smuggle a message out to his teacher, warning him that the soldiers planned to attack Nālandā soon. All the students begged the old teacher to flee, and when he refused they themselves fled, leaving only the old teacher and Dharmasvāmin. 'The teacher said: "You, Tibetan, is it not foolish of you to stay with me? All the inhabitants and disciples have fled. If you do not flee also you will be killed." Thus the teacher rebuked him. Dharmasvāmin replied: "I shall not go even if I am to be killed." The teacher was pleased and said: "You are keeping your vow and great is your burden. Now, if I were to be carried by you, would you go? If you go, we could both flee." So Dharmasvāmin took the teacher on his shoulders, and turning round one of the pillars, the teacher said: "We are off! Let us take a small basket of sugar, some rice and our favorite books. We shall not be able to go far. I know how we can save ourselves."' They hid in a small shrine some distance from the main monastery while armed soldiers searched it for loot. Later, the two monks were able to return to the monastery, but here as well as at the other temples and monasteries that had so far escaped destruction, it was only a matter of time before the end came. After burning brightly and shedding its radiance in India for one and a half millennia, the lamp of the Dharma was about to be snuffed out.

Dharmasvāmin completed his studies and finally began preparing for his return to Tibet. With tears in his eves, the aged and frail Rāhula Sri Bhadra said to his student: 'You are a good monk. Go to Tibet. I am old. Tibet is far away and we shall not meet again in this life. We shall meet again in the Sukhavati.' Dharmasvāmin returned safely to Tibet, but not before he was laid up for months by an illness in Pattata. He died at the age of sixty seven in the year 1263. Although he spent only a short time in the Middle Land, Dharmasvāmin's biography is of great interest because it gives us a rare eye-witness account of Buddhism's tragic end in India.

Sir Alexander Cunningham

The next person whose life we will examine did not come to the Middle Land as a pilgrim, but since much of what the modern pilgrim sees at Buddhist sacred sites is due to his efforts, we cannot pass him by Alexander Cunningham was born in England in 1814 and came to India in 1833 as a second lieutenant. He saw active service on several occasions, and later distinguished himself as an administrator, surveyor and engineer. Soon after his arrival, he developed an interest in India's past, and during his extensive trips through the northern plains, he never missed the opportunity to visit the hundreds of temples, forts and other ancient monuments that dotted the landscape. In those days, archaeology was still an infant science, just one step up from treasure hunting and grave robbing, but even then Cunningham's main motive seems to have been the genuine desire to better understand India's ancient history, a history almost completely unknown to the Indians themselves and only vaguely understood by Europeans.

The archaeology of that time could also be a dangerous and frustrating pursuit. Roads were rough or non-existent, malaria was a constant danger, banditry was widespread, and in many places where Cunningham went, locals would be unhelpful or would lie to him about the whereabouts of ruins in the area. Worst of all were the brahmin priests who would claim that any long neglected ruin or statue was 'sacred' as soon as Cunningham showed any interest in it, and who would then demand money before they would allow him to sketch or measure the object. But despite these difficulties, Cunningham learned to decipher a large number of ancient scripts; he located or visited an enormous number of sites, surveying and excavating many of them; and he developed a truly remarkable knowledge of India's ancient geography, its numismatics and the comparative styles of Indian sculpture. So when, in 1861, it was decided to establish an archaeological survey, Alexander Cunningham, who had just retired from the army, was the natural choice to be its first Director General. From then until his return to England in 1885, Cunningham dedicated his life to revealing and preserving India's past.

From the Buddhist point of view Cunningham's importance is due to the personal interest he took in locating places associated with the Buddha's life. As a young man he was, like many Victorians, an evangelical Christian who believed that the quicker his own faith replaced India's indigenous faiths the better. Some of his early writings even indicate that he thought the insights of archaeology could be a useful weapon to help promote Christianity. His poor opinion of Hinduism and Islam never seemed to have changed, but as he got to know Buddhism better he gradually developed a deep respect for its outlook on life and its contributions to Indian civilization. Drawing on his own vast experience, the research of others, his familiarity with the accounts of the Chinese


Dharmapāla


Edwin Arnold

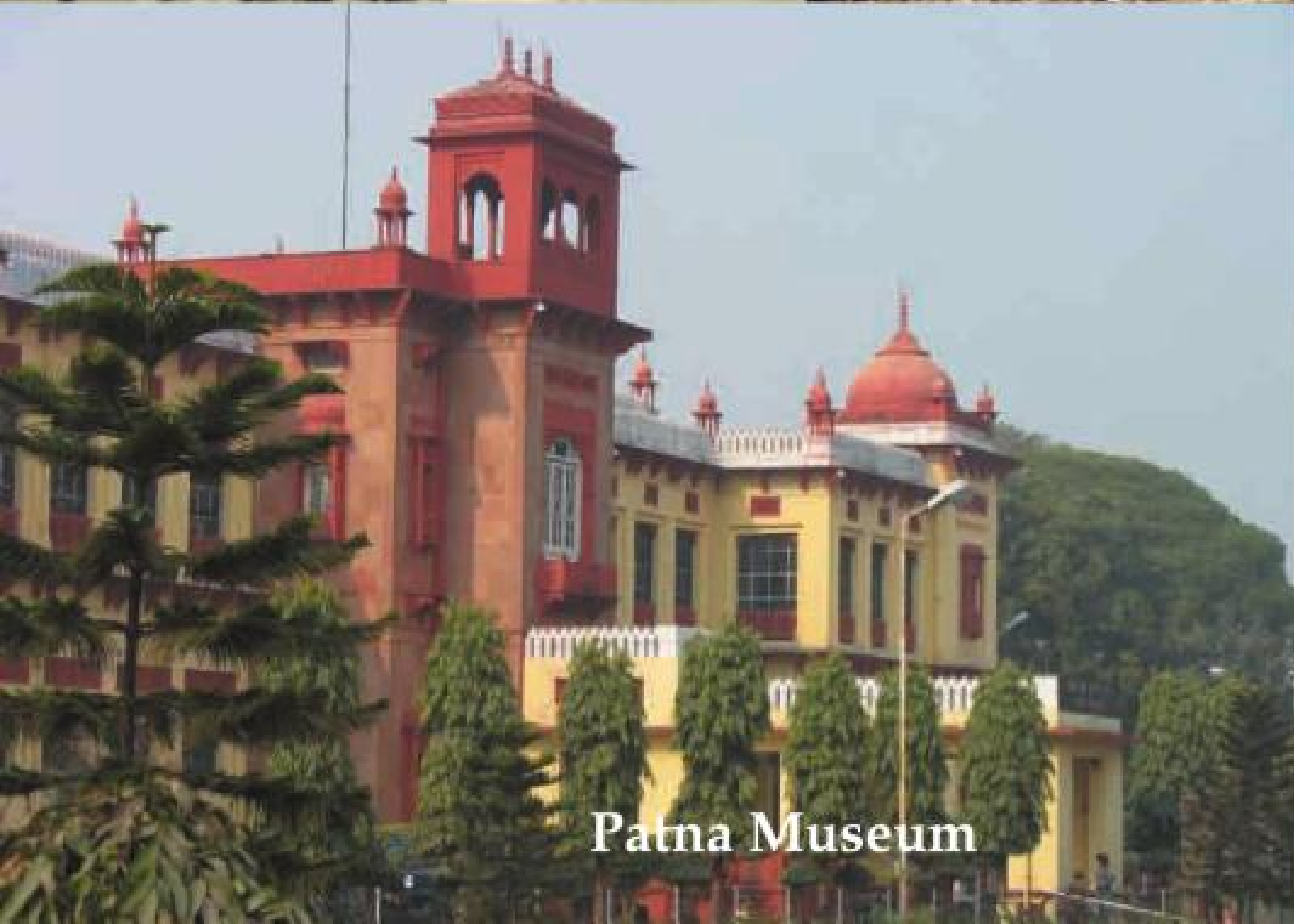

Dharmapāla


Mindon Min


Cunningham

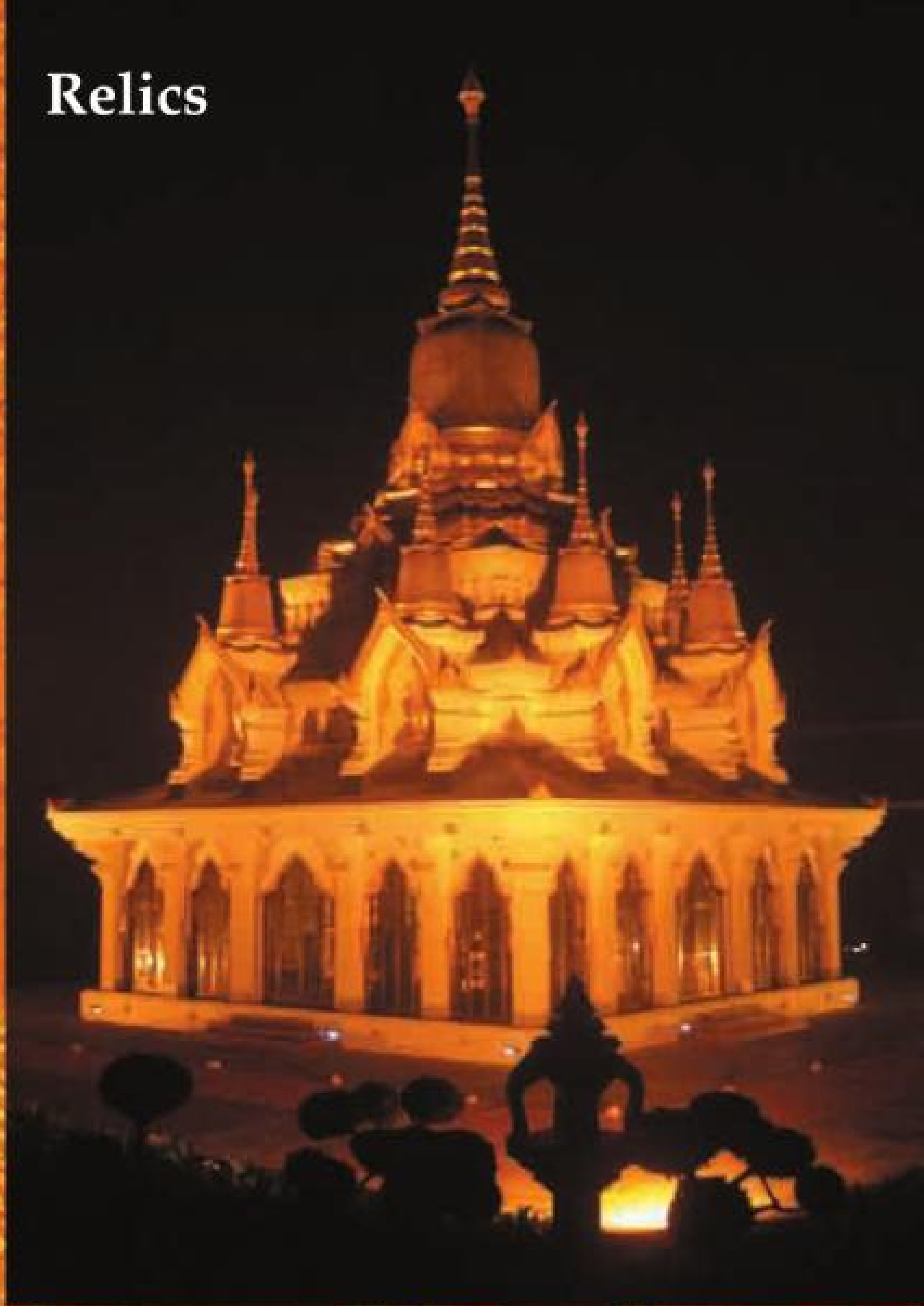

Mindon Min


Huien Tsiang


Patna Museum



Relics







pilgrims, and a good deal of uncannily accurate guesswork, Cunningham identified or verified the identity of Sāvatthī, Kosambī, Kusināra and several sites at Rājagaha. He also excavated at these places as well as at Madhurā, Sārnāth, Bhārhut, Kesariya and Bodh Gayā.

He seems to have had a particular fascination for the Mahābodhi Temple, and his first act on being appointed head of the Archaeological Survey was to visit the great temple to consider what steps could be taken to excavate in its precincts and preserve its sculptures and inscriptions. On his recommendations, Major Mead dug at the temple in 1863, though he never published an account of his finds. Cunningham visited the site again in 1871 and 1875 and his last book, *Mahabodhi, The Great Buddhist Temple under the Buddha Tree at Buddha Gaya,* contains the sum total of his own and others' research, discoveries and impressions of the temple.

Maung Ponk Kyien

In 1875 Mindon Min, the king of Burma, decided to send four ambassadors to Bodh Gayā to make offerings at the Mahābodhi Temple and assess the possibilities of building a monastery for monks he would send to look after the Bodhi Tree and a rest house for Burmese pilgrims. This royal mission was accompanied by a large retinue including a secretary, Maung Ponk Kyien, who kept careful notes on everything he saw and did during the mission. We know nothing about Maung Ponk Kyien, not even of his life subsequent to his Indian sojourn, but judging from his report he was a deeply religious Buddhist, a careful observer and a meticulous chronicler. His report is full of details about Bodh Gayā which are not available from any other source. Although Maung went to India on government service, the journey was nonetheless a pilgrimage for him, too, as it was for the others in the mission.

The mission left Rangoon on a British ship and arrived in Kolkata where it was met and welcomed by representatives of the Viceroy. British-Burmese relations were at a delicate stage at this time and all the diplomatic niceties were observed with great care by both sides. Like many Burmese Maung was obsessed with astrology and the idea of auspicious and inauspicious times and he recorded that 'at exactly 21 minutes and 49 seconds past 7:00 AM on the second day of the waning moon of the month of Pyathu' government officials arrived to escort the mission to the railway station. The ambassadors, their direct staff and the translator were provided with a first class carriage and the servants and the baggage with a second class carriage. As the train pulled out of the station, a 15-gun salute was sounded. Early the next morning the Burmese arrived at Patna and were met by local officials and a guard of honor with blazing torches. Arrangements had been made for them to rest for the day in Patna and proceed the next morning, but the senior ambassador was so anxious to see the Bodhi Tree that he asked if they

could leave as soon as possible. Six carriages and a military escort were hastily assembled and when it was ready they set off. After a bumpy dusty two-day trip they arrived in Gayā where they had a good night's rest. At nine the next morning the ambassadors mounted two elephants and together with the escort they set off for Bodh Gayā, the servants and baggage trailing behind. The Mahant had been informed that the mission was coming and of its importance and he had prepared quarters for them. Sensing that he was in for a windfall, he welcomed the Burmese in a most solicitous and friendly manner. After chatting with the ambassadors for a while, he disappeared and returned shortly after with several tiny golden umbrellas and streamers, which had been offered by an earlier royal Burmese mission. He also showed them an inscription in Burmese, which Maung carefully copied. As the discussions drew to a close the ambassadors offered the Mahant a betel case, a drinking cup and some Burmese pickled tea. Maung does not mention how the Mahant responded to these rather modest gifts.

After spending the next three days meditating, observing the Precepts and looking at all the temples and ruins, the mission got to work. They arranged with the Mahant to buy some land, measured it out and drew up the legal papers for its proper transfer. They also had religious duties to perform. 'Every morning we offered food at the Mahābodhi Temple on behalf of Your Majesty and every evening a thousand flowers and a thousand lamps. Each morning and evening we also poured water from as many golden bowls as there are years in Your Majesty's life over the shrine. We then prayed that Your Majesty might be powerful and long lived, that Her Majesty the Queen, Their Highnesses the Prince and Princess and the Royal Relatives might be free from sickness and be happy and glorious; that the ministers, state officials and all Your Majesty's subjects might be free from sickness. We also prayed for the promotion and progress of the Buddha's teachings.' The Burmese were shocked by how neglected and dirty Bodh Gayā was. After getting the Mahant's permission, they cleared the area around the Bodhi Tree and enclosed it in a protective wall and later they removed a dead and rotten branch from the Tree and reverently placed it in one of the small empty shrines. They also collected all the broken Buddha statues scattered around and put then in the chamber of the Mahābodhi Temple. Thinking that the tank on the south side of the sacred precincts was the Mucalinda Tank they constructed a wall with four gates around it.

Everything Maung Ponk Kyien saw, filled him with awe and wonder. One day the ambassadors distributed some money to the poor in the local village and later that day it rained, as it did the next day and the next. Maung interpreted this as a very auspicious sign. But more wonders were to follow. 'In the morning we found that the Bodhi Tree, and only it, was covered with tender green leaves which evoked in us an intense desire to worship it.' Being familiar with the scriptures Maung tried to

locate all the shrines marking the Buddha's seven weeks at Bodh Gayā, although most of his identifications were wrong. He was particularly fascinated by the Nerañjarā River. The locals told him that in effect the river was upside down—more water flowed under the sand than above it.

In between carrying out his official duties, Maung tried to find out everything he could about Bodh Gayā. He recorded the number of miles from Kolkata to Bodh Gayā and the number of railway stations and villages one had to pass through to get there. He learned that the village of Bodh Gayā consisted of two hundred houses and that it and all the arable land around it belonged to the Mahant who collected a revenue of 7500 rupees a year from it. The Mahant himself 'dressed in a red turban and a muslin coat embroidered with gold and silver filigree work like that worn by Hindu Maharajas.' There were a thousand swamis in the Mahant's residence or palace. Because they earned a good income from rents and gifts from devotees and yet led frugal lives, they had amassed vast wealth over the generations. Maung also noticed that although local Hindus did not use the Mahābodhi Temple, they came in large numbers every Saturday to worship the Bodhi Tree.

Before the ambassadors left Bodh Gayā, they gave the Mahant thirty rupees to be used to buy flowers, lights and incense to be offered in the Temple and to the Bodhi Tree twice a day. They also left two slaves with him who were to perform these pūjās. On his return to Burma, Maung Ponk Kyine made a full report to the king and it was as a result of this that it was decided to send a second mission to Bodh Gayā two years later with the more ambitious goal of repairing the Mahābodhi Temple.

Sir Edwin Arnold

Starting at the beginning of the 19th century, English travelers would occasionally visit Bodh Gayā or Sārnāth to observe the crumbling monuments and hopefully to collect 'curios,' many of which could be easily picked up at the neglected and forlorn places. But the Englishman who came to Bodh Gayā in 1885 did not come as a sightseer or tourist, but as a pilgrim. His name was Edwin Arnold. Arnold already had a reputation as a fine poet when he was appointed Principal of Deccan College in Pune in 1857, and with his liberal attitude and his knowledge of Sanskrit he soon developed an interest in Indian religion, particularly in Buddhism.

On his return to England in 1861, Arnold got a job as a feature writer with the *Daily Telegraph*, a paper he was later to become editor of, and continued his study of Buddhism. Exactly what he read is not known, there were few reliable books on Buddhism at the time and even fewer translations of Buddhist scriptures, but in 1879 he published his famous poem, *The Light of Asia*, which accurately and sympathetically portrayed the life and teachings of the Buddha. The poem was an enormous critical success and helped the British public understand that rather than being

the 'gloomy pessimistic idolatry' described in the accounts of Christian missionaries, Buddhism was a sophisticated and ethical philosophy with its own beauty and appeal. Buddhists in the East, long used to hearing only derogatory comments about their religion from Europeans, were delighted with the poem and made Arnold into something of a hero.

Arnold had long wished to go to Bodh Gayā and Sārnāth, and when he received numerous invitations to visit Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Japan, he decided to tour the East and at the same time fulfill his long-cherished wish. On his arrival, he was deeply moved as he stood in the gallery of the Mahābodhi Temple, inspired to think that here the Buddha attained enlightenment, but at the same time saddened by the general neglect of the great temple. He went to the back of the temple and stood quietly under the Bodhi Tree and when he asked one of the Hindu priests if he could have a few leaves from the tree, the priest replied: 'Pluck as many as you like, sahib, it is nought to us.' Later, Arnold went to Sārnāth, saying of the place afterwards: 'A more consecrated ground than this could hardly be found anywhere else.' Continuing on his journey, Arnold arrived in Sri Lanka to a tumultuous welcome from the island's Buddhists. When he met with Weligama Sri Sumangala, the most erudite scholar-monk of the time and one of the leaders of the Buddhist revival that was rapidly gaining momentum there, Arnold described the woeful state of the Mahābodhi Temple and suggested that something should be done about it. The idea was met with great enthusiasm, and Arnold promised to speak with British authorities in England and India, something he could easily do, being well placed in the British establishment.

While it was Edwin Arnold who conceived the noble idea of restoring the Mahābodhi Temple to Buddhists and set it in motion, the task of carrying it through to the end was ably taken up by others. But even at this time Arnold lent his influence and his pen to the cause. He met with or wrote to the Governor of Ceylon, the Secretary of State for India, General Cunningham 'who thoroughly sympathized with the idea' even the Viceroy, and in 1893 he wrote an article for the *Daily Telegraph* eloquently and passionately arguing for Buddhist control of the Mahābodhi Temple. When Edwin Arnold died in 1904, the idea he had conceived some twenty-one years before had still not been realized, and indeed would not be realized for nearly another 50 years. But as the pilgrim worships in the Mahābodhi Temple today or wanders in the quiet gardens that surround it, it would be good to remember what modern pilgrims owe to this early western Buddhist.

Anagārika Dharmapāla

The man who carried out the idea first initiated by Edwin Arnold was the Sri Lankan Anagārika Dharmapāla. Born into an affluent and deeply religious family in 1864, Dharmapāla was at an early age influenced by

the Buddhist revival that swept through the Island from the 1870's onwards. Although he knew that he wanted to dedicate his considerable energy and talents to helping Buddhism shake off centuries of stagnation, it was not until he went on a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā that he knew exactly how he was going to do it. In 1891 he visited Sārnāth and was shocked and saddened by what he saw. The place where the Buddha had proclaimed the Dhamma for the first time was being used by local villagers to dump rubbish and graze pigs. The ruins of the once magnificent monasteries, temples and stupas were of no interest to anyone except in that they could be pulled down to provide cheap bricks for building.

A few days later, on the 22nd of January, Dharmapāla and his friend, the Japanese monk Kozan, arrived in Bodh Gayā. The Mahābodhi Temple had been restored some years before, but there was no one to maintain or care for the temple, and its environs were overgrown and dirty. As Dharmapāla worshipped at the Vajirāsana, the 'Diamond Throne' of Enlightenment, a sudden inspiration born of deep devotion occurred to him. He describes what happened in his diary: 'After driving six miles (from Gayā), we arrived at the holy spot. Within a mile you could see lying scattered here and there broken statues, etc., of our blessed Lord. At the entrance to the Mahant's temple on both sides of the portico there are statues of our Lord in the attitude of meditation and expounding the Law. How elevating! The sacred Vihāra, the Lord sitting on his throne and the great solemnity which pervades all round makes the heart of the pious devotee weep. How delightful! As soon as I touched with my forehead the Vajirāsana a sudden impulse came to my mind. It prompted me to stop here and take care of this sacred spot—so sacred that nothing in the world is equal to this place where Prince Sakya Sinha gained Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. When the sudden impulse came to me, I asked Kozan priest whether he would join me, and he joyously assented, and more than this, he had been thinking the same thing. We both solemnly promised that we would stop here until some Buddhist priests come to take charge of the place.'

The Mahābodhi Temple had not been functioning as a place of worship for centuries, but some time at the end of the 16th century, a wandering Hindu monk had arrived in the area and settled down nearby, and his successors, who came to be known as the Mahants, gradually came to look upon the deserted and ruined temple as their own. Although supposedly a simple ascetic, the present Mahant was a wealthy and powerful landlord. In the beginning, he had no objections to Dharmapāla's presence; he even gave him the keys to a nearby rest house so he could stay. Immediately, Dharmapāla wrote letters to friends and Buddhist organizations in Sri Lanka, Burma and India describing the state of the temple and asking for help to maintain it properly. But the little money he had was running out, replies to his pleas for help were slow in coming, and he started to fear that he might have to abandon his promise. In

this, his darkest hour, Dharmapāla had a profound spiritual experience as he sat meditating in the temple: 'This night at 12 for the first time in my life I experienced that peace which passeth all understanding. How peaceful it was.'

The purpose of his life now became perfectly clear to him. Like much of Buddhism itself, the Mahābodhi Temple had become more of an interesting relic of the past than something vital and living. He would restore and revive them both. He decided he could only do this if he left the temple and tried to arouse public interest and support in Buddhist countries. He founded the Mahabodhi Society to organize and coordinate the restoration of the temple and the Mahabodhi journal, the first international Buddhist publication, to inform the Buddhist world about the society's progress. He toured Burma and Sri Lanka, addressing public meetings, and he organized tours for pilgrims from Sri Lanka to India. Unfortunately, the Mahant's desire to cash in on the pilgrims who now started to come, as well as ambiguities about exactly who owned the temple, led to long and bitter court battles and even to violence.

In the following years Anagārika Dharmapāla's life was so eventful that it is difficult even to give an outline of it. He addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 (the first time Buddhism had been preached in the West), he founded several Buddhist newspapers in Sri Lanka, he was responsible for the first contact in centuries between Mahayana and Theravadin Buddhists, he built schools, dispensaries and vocational training institutes, and he restored Sārnāth and turned it once again into a center of Buddhism. Due to his efforts, Buddhists were once again able to worship in the Mahābodhi Temple and although their legal right to do so was not achieved until 1949, it was Anagārika Dharmapāla who set the process in motion. Just before he died in Sārnāth in 1933, he said: 'I would like to be reborn twenty-five more times to spread Lord Buddha's Dhamma.'

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The Stupa

The most characteristic of all Buddhist monuments is the stupa, examples of which are to be found in almost all sacred places in the Middle Land. The word stupa is derived from the Sanskrit root meaning 'to heap', and the structure itself was originally a mound of earth put up over the ashes of particularly important people. When Ānanda asked the Buddha who was worthy of a stupa he replied:

> 'There are four persons worthy of a stupa. What four? A Tathāgata, an arahat, a fully enlightened Buddha; a Silent Buddha; a disciple of a Tathāgata and a Universal Monarch. And why are these four worthy of a stupa? Because when one thinks: "This is the stupa of

a Tathāgata, a Silent Buddha, a disciple of the Buddha, a Universal Statesman," the heart becomes peaceful, and then when the body breaks up at death, one goes to a good destiny or to heaven. That is why these four are worthy of a stupa.'[9]

He also said that 'whoever, with devoted heart, lays flowers, incense or colored paste there, it will be to their welfare and happiness for a long time.' After the Buddha attained final Nirvana in Kusināra, his ashes were divided between eight claimants and these along with the vessel in which the ashes had been collected and the charcoal from the funeral pyre were enshrined in stupas.[10] These first ten Buddhist stupas were probably simple mounds of earth with wooden umbrellas on the top. The umbrella was a symbol of royalty in ancient India and the Buddha, it will be remembered, was the scion of a royal family.

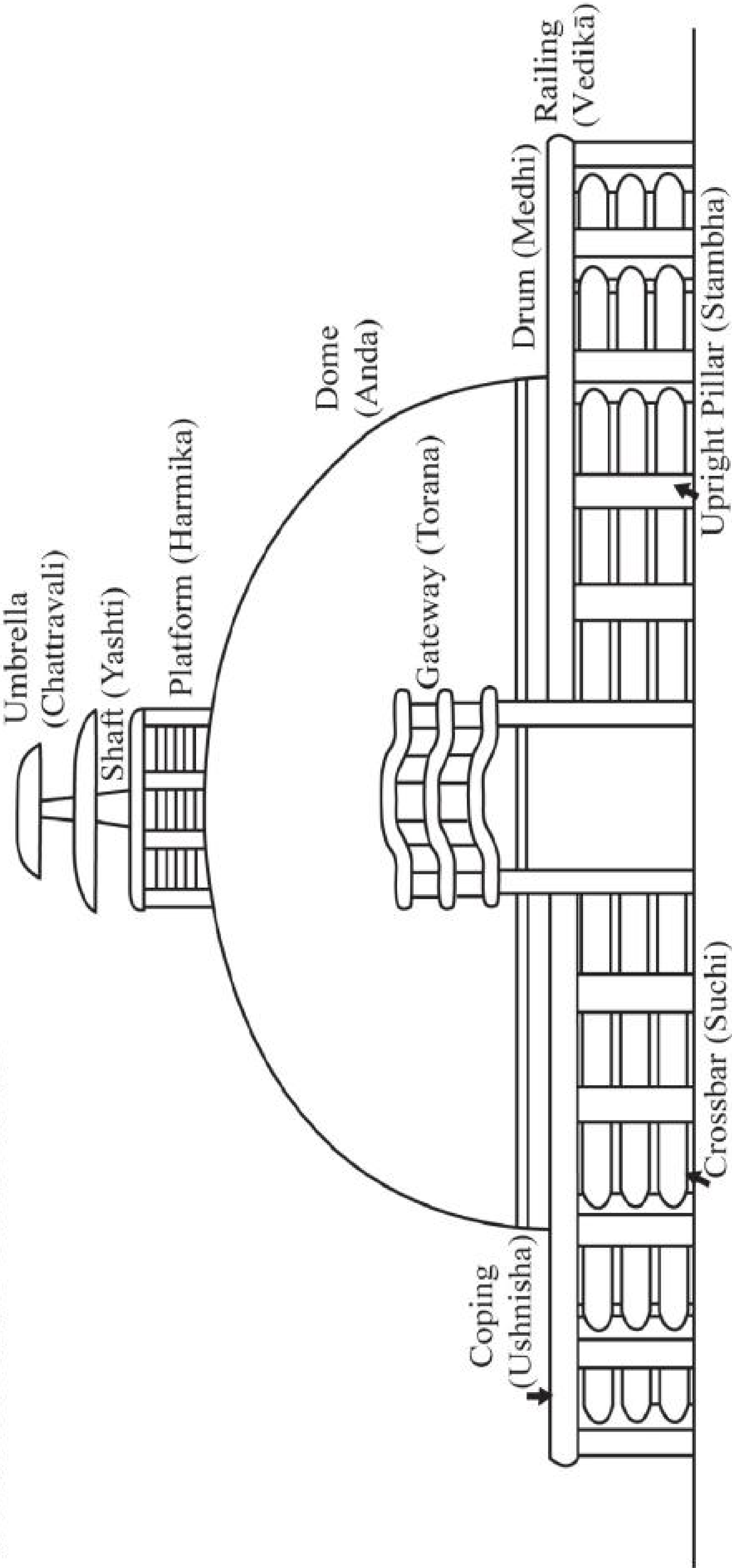
From these simple prototypes, the stupa developed into beautiful and elaborate structures and came to be seen as a symbol of the Buddha's presence. Stupas may be grouped into four main types: those built over the relics of the Buddha or one of his disciples (*sārīrika*), those containing objects used by the Buddha (*paribhogika*), those commemorating an important incident in the Buddha's life (*uddesika*) and finally, votive stupas made to acquire religious merit. Votive stupas often contained hundreds of tiny statues of the Buddha, copies of Buddhist texts or clay tablets inscribed with the famous Epitome of Dhamma:

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha,
tesañ ca yo nirodho
evamvādi mahāsamaṇo'ti.

Those things that proceed from a cause,
Of those the Tathāgata has told the cause,
And that which is their stopping,
Thus is the docrine of the Great Recluse.[11]

Hundreds of votive stupas are to be found clustered around the Mahābodhi Temple, the Nirvana Temple at Kusināra, the stupa at Vesālī and also around the temples at Nālandā.

The stupa is usually made up of five parts, the drum (*medhi*) supporting the dome (*anda*) on top of which is a raised platform (*harmika*). From the middle of this raised platform comes a shaft (*yashti*) crowned by one or several umbrellas (*chattravali*). Outside India, this shaft and its umbrellas eventually evolved into the spire so characteristic of Sri Lanka, Thai and Tibetan stupas, or the tiered, curved eaves of Chinese and Japanese pagodas.


STUPA AND RAILING
Umbrella (Chattravali)
Shaft (Yashti)
Platform (Harmika)
Dome (Anda)
Gateway (Torana)
Drum (Medhi)
Railing (Vedikā)
Upright Pillar (Stambha)
Crossbar (Suchi)
Coping (Ushnisha)

The Railing

Another architectural form found at Buddhist sites, often surrounding stupas, is the railing (*vedikā*). Railings were used to fence sacred objects like trees, pillars or stupas and were originally made of wood. When the need for something more enduring arose, these wooden railings were merely copied in stone. Railings consist of upright pillars (*stambha*), crossbars (*suchi*) and the coping (*ushnisha*). Some of the earliest Buddhist art consists of carvings on the upright pillars of stupa railings which usually had impressive gateways (*torāna*) at the points of entry, the most outstanding examples of which are the richly carved ones at Sāñchī and the one from Bhārhut, now in the Indian Museum in Kolkata. The only railing and gateway still to be seen in the Middle Land are those at Bodh Gayā.

Monasteries

The first Buddhist monks, like the Buddha himself, were itinerant wanderers living 'in the forest, at the root of a tree or in an empty place.' Some of their favorite haunts were the pleasure parks (*ārāma*) that wealthy citizens often used to maintain on the outskirts of cities and towns. Here monks were able to find pleasant surroundings, not too far from habitation, which they required in order to collect their food, while also giving them opportunities to meet and talk with the wanderers of other sects who likewise frequented such parks.

According to the *Vinaya*, a wealthy merchant of Rājagaha, impressed by the calm bearing of the monks, offered to build them small huts and when the Buddha was asked if this would be appropriate he replied: 'Monks, I allow five types of living places—a dwelling (*vihāra*), a curved hut (*addhayoga*), a hall (*pasāda*), a house (*hammiya*) or a cave (*guhā*).'[12] Except for caves, the differences between these types of buildings are not clear, although they were probably all made from earth, wood and thatch and differed from each other mainly in size and shape. After King Bimbisāra gave a pleasure park to the Buddha, a gift that was followed by many others, more permanent and substantial structures began to be built, and monks became more settled. The emphasis slowly evolved from 'wandering alone like a rhinoceros'[13] to 'living together in friendliness and harmony, like milk and water mixed, looking upon each other with the eye of affection.'[14] The two words that were most commonly used for a monastery were *sanghārāma* which originally meant a park belonging to the Sangha, and *vihāra*. A dwelling built for the Buddha's personal use was referred to as a fragrant hut (*gandhakuti*), a name that in later centuries was usually assigned to the main shrine in any monastic establishment.

The description of monasteries in the *Vinaya* gives us some idea of what these first proper dwellings looked like. They might have a gate

house (*upatthāna sāla*), individual cells (*parivena*), a store-room (*kappiya kuti*), a hall with a fire place (*agga sāla*), a toilet (*vaccha kuti*) and perhaps a well (*udapāna*) in the courtyard for drinking and washing water. A monk's cell would have had a door with a bolt, a window with either railing lattice or bars on it and a curtain 'to keep squirrels and bats out.' In the room, there would have been a bed, chair, rug, spittoon and a hook to hang things on. Cells in some of the monasteries at Nālandā have niches in the walls in which books and lamps could be placed. By about the first century CE, monasteries had taken on the form that they were to keep for the next thousand years—individual cells built around a square or rectangular courtyard with a gatehouse at one end and shrine at the other.

By the time Huien Tsiang came to India, monasteries had become magnificent establishments. He described them thus:

> 'The monasteries are constructed with extraordinary skill. A three-storied tower is erected at each of the four corners. The beams and projecting heads are carved with great skill in different shapes. The doors, windows and walls are painted profusely; the monk's cells are decorated on the outside and plain on the inside. In the center of the building is the hall, high and wide. There are various storied chambers and turrets of different height and shape, without any fixed rule. The doors open towards the east.'

The Buddha Statue

For nearly five hundred years, there were no statues of the Buddha. When the artist wished to indicate the Buddha's presence, he did so with the use of symbols—an empty chair or throne, a tree, a stupa or a pair of footprints. At Bodh Gayā, there are three large round stones with such footprints (*pada*) on them, still worshipped by pilgrims. The first Buddha statues began to be produced during the Kushāna period probably under the impact of Greek influence. Over the next thousand years, Indian artists attempted to portray the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha in stone and bronze, and few would doubt that they succeeded brilliantly. From the simple smiling Buddhas of Mathurā to the crowned and bejeweled Buddhas of the Pāla era, artists expressed their devotion in sculptures that in turn became objects of devotion.

Buddha statues usually sit in the lotus posture (*padmāsana*), stand upright, or occasionally, lie down. The lying statue represents the Buddha's final Nirvana. Standing statues like those of the Gupta period are usually in the relaxed 'thrice bent' posture (*tribhanga*), while those of the Pāla are somewhat straight and stiff. Statues sitting on a chair or throne are usually not of Gotama Buddha but rather of Maitreya, the Buddha of the next era. Most Buddha statues have a lump on the top of the head (*unhisa*), a mark between the eyebrows or on the forehead (*unna*), and sometimes






III









IV

wheels on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, these being some of the thirty two marks of a great being (*mahāpurisa lakkhana*), auspicious signs that are supposed to appear on the body of all Buddhas.[15] The earlobes are always elongated and it is very likely that the Buddha actually had earlobes like this due to the heavy earrings that he would have worn prior to his renunciation.

The Buddha's robe (*cīvara*) is usually depicted in one of two ways, in open style with one shoulder exposed or in closed style with the robe covering the whole upper part of the body. When depicted in this second way the end corner of the robe is usually held in the left hand and the under-robe (*antaravāsaka*) can be seen around the ankles. In standing statues from the Gupta period, the outer robe often clings to the body allowing the belt (*kāyabandhana*) holding the under-robe to be seen. Early statues of the Buddha often have a round halo (*pabhamandala*) behind the head, while those from the Gupta and Pāla periods have an elongated one behind the whole body. Sometimes, instead of this elongated halo, there are depictions of various events in the Buddha's life.

The hands of the Buddha are always placed in one of several gestures (*mudrā*). Both hands resting in the lap is the gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*), both raised in front of the chest is the gesture of turning the wheel of the Dhamma (*dharmacakramudrā*), one hand raised with the palm facing outward is the gesture of imparting fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*), while one hand lowered with the palm facing outward is the gesture of bestowing blessings (*varadamudrā*). The earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparshamudrā*) shows one hand in the lap and the other placed on the knee with the tips of the fingers touching the ground. According to the *Lalitavistara*, just after his enlightenment, the Buddha touched the earth and called upon it to witness his great victory. Sometimes Buddha statues have small figures of devotees at their sides, hands raised to their chest with palms joined in the gesture of worship (*añjalimudrā*).

Periods

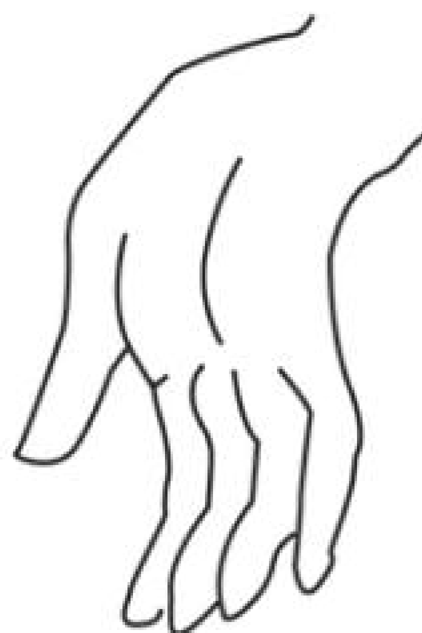
Having flourished in India for nearly 1700 years, and having spread to almost every corner of the subcontinent, Buddhism is represented in many of the regional and dynastic genres of Indian art. We will briefly examine some of the periods in Buddhist art that were significant in the Middle Land.

(1) The Mauryan Period. The first examples of Buddhist art date from the Mauryan period (323 to 185 BCE) which takes its name from the dynasty of which King Asoka was the third ruler. Very little from this period survives, but what does shows considerable unity in style and craftsmanship. The reason for this is because the Mauryan empire was highly centralized and many of the surviving pieces were probably

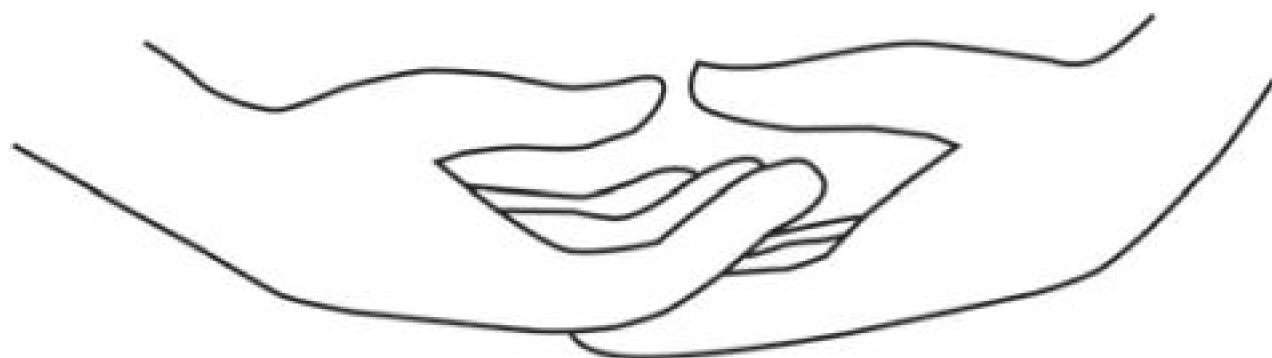
HAND GESTURES



Gesture of Imparting Fearlessness
(Abhayamudrā)



Gesture of Bestowing Blessings
(Varadamudrā)



Gesture of Meditation
(Dhyānamudrā)



The Gesture of Turning the Wheel of Dharma
(Dharmacakramudrā)



Earth Touching Gesture
(Bhūmisparshamudrā)

commissioned by the state and even produced in state-owned workshops. Except for a few terracottas found in Patna and several other places, most Mauryan art is monolithic in nature, made out of Chunar sandstone and finished with a high polish. Asoka's pillars and capitals, the remains of the great pillared hall at Kumrahar, the outer Vajirāsana at Bodh Gayā, and the fly whisk bearer from Dadargani all display these three characteristics.

(2) The Sunga Period. The last Mauryan king was assassinated in about 185 BCE by one of his generals, Pusyamitra Sunga, ushering in the Sunga dynasty which ruled much of northern and central India until 75 BCE. Although the Sungas favored Brahminism, it was also a period of great growth for Buddhism. The most important work of art from the Sunga period is the railing from the great stupa at Bhārhut on the southwestern edge of the Middle Land. The stupa itself has completely disappeared, but parts of the railing and gateway have been reassembled in the Indian Museum in Kolkata. The railing is richly carved and includes some of the first attempts to depict incidents in the Buddha's life. Not as richly carved as the Bhārhut railing but probably dating from the same period is the earliest part of the railing around the Mahābodhi Temple at Bodh Gayā.

(3) The Kushāna Period. In about 135 BCE, a tribe of people that came to be known as the Kushānas, who originated in the Kansu region of China, arrived in northwest India and began to build an empire that eventually stretched as far as Bangladesh and lasted until the 3rd century CE. The greatest of the Kushāna kings, Kanishka I, was an enthusiastic patron of Buddhism and its literature and art, and is reputed to have convened the fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir. The Kushāna's southern capital was at Madhurā, and during this period the city's artisans produced a large amount of outstanding sculptures, examples of which have been found at sites throughout the Middle Land. The first Buddha statues were produced in this period. Most Kushāna sculpture is made from fine-grained pink-beige Sikri sandstone which gives statues the appearance and feel of human skin. Extensive collections of Kushāna period sculpture are to be found in the museums at Delhi, Madhurā, Allahabad, Lucknow, Sārnāth and Kolkata.

(4) The Gupta period, which lasted for about three centuries from 320 CE, represents the golden age of Indian culture. Most of the Gupta kings were Hindus, but Buddhism flourished in the peaceful and prosperous atmosphere their strong rule engendered. Several of the finest cave temples at Ajantā and Ellorā as well as the sculpture and paintings at the latter place date from this period. Huien Tsiang tells us that a 25-meter-high metal statue was built at Nālandā at this time, and the fine bronze Buddha statue from Sultanganj gives some idea of the skill of Gupta metal-casters. Likewise, the finest stone sculptures from Sārnāth date from this period. Towards the end of the Gupta period, much of

northern India was ravaged by Hun invaders from Central Asia and many Buddhist sites in the Middle Land show evidence of destruction from around this time.

(5) The Pāla and Sena Periods. From the 8th century right up to the Muslim invasion in the 13th century, Bengal together with the eastern part of the Middle Land was ruled by the Pāla and later the Sena dynasties. The Pāla kings were all Buddhists and under them monasteries and temples grew wealthy and powerful. A large number of sculptures, usually carved from black chloritic stone, bronzes and illuminated palm leaf manuscripts from the Pāla period still survive. The statues were probably brightly painted in accordance with the iconographic precepts of works like the *Sādhanamālā*, and almost all surviving pieces have their faces damaged due to being defaced during the Muslim invasion. It was during the Pāla period that Buddhism was established in Tibet and Burma and the Pāla school has profoundly influenced the art of both those countries.

Collections of Pāla stone and bronze statues can be seen in and around the Mahābodhi Temple and in the museums at Delhi, Nālandā and Patna and in three museums in Kolkata; the Indian Museum, the State Archaeological Museum and the Astosh Museum at Kolkata University.

HINTS FOR PILGRIMS

ATTITUDE

India is not always an easy country to travel in. Roads are bad, delays are common and officials can be rude and unhelpful. However, some visitors compound these difficulties by refusing to accept the Indian way of doing things and by always comparing India unfavorably with their own country. Such attitudes only lead to frayed tempers and unpleasantness. Acceptance, patience and a sense of humor will help make your pilgrimage more enjoyable.

WHEN TO GO

The only suitable time to visit India is during the winter (November to February)—the summer is too hot and during the monsoon travel is difficult because of flooded roads and washed-away bridges. During the winter temperature at night and in the early morning can drop as low as 5 degrees so it is necessary to bring warm cloths. Probably the best time to begin your pilgrimage is towards the end of the monsoon (the last weeks of October)—the rain is tailing off, the air is cool and clear, the country is still green and the crowds visiting popular destinations are still not too big.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

In this book I have given no information about visas, accommodation, prices and so on, information that is best obtained from an up-to-date guidebook. One of the best of these is *India*, published by Lonely Planet Publications. The booklets and maps available from the Government of India Department of Tourism can also be useful, although the information is sometimes scant or inaccurate. Even official sources in India (maps, road signs, Department of Tourism brochures and so on) quote different distances between one destination and another and so the distances given in this book should be considered only approximate.

READING MATERIAL

It can be a wonderful experience to read the discourses of the Buddha at the very place where he delivered them. Most of the discourses mentioned in this book can be found in M. Walshe's *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* and Bhikkhu Bodhi's *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, both published by Wisdom Publications. Despite their bulk it is worthwhile taking these books on your pilgrimage and reading them in the appropriate places.

Making Donations

Although several Buddhist sites are run by the Archaeological Survey of India, there are sometimes donation boxes in shrines within the ruins, as at Kusināra for example. Donations given at such places are usually misappropriated. At some sites, ASI employees will try to act as guides without being asked and then expect to be paid, or they might simply demand money. The Gijjhakūta and Kusināra have become particularly bad of late. Giving in to such people only encourages corruption and means that those who come next will be even more harassed. Beware also of people masquerading as monks and soliciting donations, especially around Kusināra. If you wish to make donations, do so in the functioning Buddhist temples adjoining each site. If you would like to help a worthwhile charitable project, contact the Root Institute or the Mahabodhi Society, both at Bodh Gayā.

Meditation at Bodh Gayā

During the winter several well-known teachers and organizations conduct meditation courses at Bodh Gayā. Christopher Tittmus and other teachers hold insight meditation courses at the Thai Temple every year in January and February. These courses are very popular so it is good to book beforehand. For details see www.bodhgayaretreats.org. The Dhammabodhi Meditation Centre just out of Bodh Gayā near the university conducts ten and twenty day insight meditation retreats throughout the year. For the dates of these, see www.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schbodhi.shtml. Tel: 91-6312200437.

Itinerary

Although the sacred places mentioned in this book are spread over a wide area, India's vast network of railways makes each of them relatively easy to reach. It is possible to go by train to all the major towns or cities near each sacred place and then proceed to the destination by bus, taxi, or in some cases by rickshaw. The most convenient itinerary for those who wish to visit every site is as follows:

(1) Delhi-Mathurā by train.

(2) Mathurā-Allahabad by train; proceed to Kosambī by bus or taxi.

(3) Allahabad-Vārānasi by train; proceed to Sārnāth by bus or rickshaw.

(4) Vārānasi-Gayā by train; proceed to Bodh Gayā by bus or rickshaw.

(5) Gurpa—By taxi from Gayā or Bodh Gayā.

(6) Gayā—Rājgir by bus or taxi.

(7) Rājgir—Patna by bus.

(8) Patna-Vesālī, Kesariya and Lauriya Nandangar by bus or taxi, and return to Patna. Alternatively, instead of returning to Patna, one can

proceed directly to Gorakhpur via Gopalganj and Kusināra. This can only be done if one is traveling by taxi.

(9) Patna-Bhagalpur by train or taxi to see Campā and Vikrmasila and then return to Patna.

(10) Patna-Don via Siwan by taxi and return to Patna. Alternatively, one can take a taxi to Don from Gopalganj.

(11) Sonpur (across the river from Patna)-Gorakhpur by train, then proceed to Kusināra by bus or taxi.

(12) Gorakhpur-Naugarh by train; proceed to Kapilavatthu by taxi. Taxis to Lumbinī can also be hired in Naugarh.

(13) Naugarh-Balrāmpur by train; proceed to Sāvatthī by bus.

(14) Balrāmpur-Delhi via Lucknow by train.

Schedule

Much of what the Buddhist sacred places hold for the modern pilgrim is intangible and can best be appreciated only by staying in some locations for a while. Rushing from one place to another and paying visits in between to the many tourist attractions India has to offer means one will see the monuments but miss the atmosphere. Whenever possible, the pilgrim should try to spend at least two days each at Sārnāth, Rājgir and Sāvatthī, and three days at Bodh Gayā. This will allow time for meditation, reflection and unhurried sightseeing and will also give one a rest from the usual frustrations of traveling in India.

Museums

Most people will enter or leave India either through New Delhi, Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai (Bombay) or Chennai (Madras), and each of these cities has museums of great interest to Buddhists.

The National Museum in New Delhi is the best in India and one of the finest in the world. It has an extensive collection of Buddhist art from most periods as well as statues, silk paintings and books discovered by Sir Aurel Stein during his expeditions in Central Asia. The National Museum is in Janpath and is open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and closed on Mondays.

The Indian Museum in Kolkata is the subcontinent's oldest and though it has the atmosphere of a warehouse it remains one of its best. The Buddhist collection includes the railing and gateway of the Bhārhut Stupa assembled in one gallery as well as sculptures from the Kushāna, Gandhāra, Gupta and Pāla periods. Many of the important antiquities found at Bodh Gayā are also on display. The Indian Museum is on Chowringhee (Jawaharlal Nehru Road) and is open from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM and is closed on Mondays.

The Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai has Buddhist sculpture from Maharastra, Sindh and Gandhāra as well as an extensive collection

of Tibetan art. The Prince of Wales Museum is at Wellington Circle between Colaba and the Fort and is open from 10:15 AM to 6:00 PM and closed on Monday.

The Government Museum in Chennai houses many of the sculptures from the great stupa at Amarāvati as well as the beautiful Buddhist bronzes found at Nāgapattam. Some Buddha images from Kāñchipura can also be found in the garden. The government Museum is on Pantheon Road within walking distance of Egmore Station and is open from 9.30 am to 5 pm and closed on Fridays and national holidays.

Another museum which, although in the area covered in this book, has not yet been mentioned is the State Museum in Lucknow. This museum has a large collection of Kushāna and Gandhāra period sculpture, a fragmentary Asokan capital, an ancient Buddhist monk's begging bowl and some of the sculptures found at Sāvatthī. The highlight of the Buddhist collection is the exquisite 11th century statue of Avalokitesvara Sīhanāda from Mahoba (Acc No 0.224). The State Museum is at Banarsi Bagh within the grounds of the Zoo and is open from 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM, and closed on Mondays.

India's museums have a bewildering variety of opening and closing times. Likewise there is no uniformity concerning what days they are closed. Some are closed on national holidays and state holidays, some on one but not the other, some are open on both but closed the following day, and so on. It can be very frustrating to make one's way to the local museum only to find it closed, and while I have tried to give the correct details in this book, it is best to check first wherever possible and to be aware when there are public holidays.

LUMBINĪ

In a village called Lumbinī in the Sakyan country, a Bodhisatta has been born, an excellent jewel, without comparison. This is why we are so glad, so excited, so jubilant.[1]

Towards the end of the last month of her pregnancy, Mahā Māyā set out from Kapilavatthu with her retinue so she could deliver her first child at her paternal home at Devadaha, in accordance with the custom of the time. As the party approached a park called Lumbinī, the labor pains began and the child was born under a sal tree (*Shorea robusta*) in the park. On that full moon of May in the year 563 BCE, a light shone forth into the world which continues to shine today, allowing us to develop self-awareness, wisdom, and awareness of our fellow human beings, compassion. 'When the Bodhisatta was emerging from his mother's womb, a great radiant light surpassing even the radiance of the gods shone forth into the world. And in the black, gloomy regions of darkness between the galaxies, where even the light of our moon and sun, powerful and majestic though they are, cannot reach, even there that great, radiant light shone. And the beings who lived in those regions of darkness became aware of each other because of that radiance, and they said: "Behold, it seems that other beings live here also."'[2]

Although he was born here, the Buddha seems to have visited Lumbinī on only one other occasion during his life. According to the ancient commentaries, the Devadaha Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya Sutta No. 101) was delivered by the Buddha in Lumbinī while on his way from Kapilavatthu to Devadaha.[3] Fortunately, this auspicious place is still known today because King Asoka came here on pilgrimage in 250 BCE and marked the place with a great stone pillar. Despite its importance, there are very few references to Lumbinī in the following centuries. A monk from there arrived in China in the 6th century and translated several texts into Chinese, and in the 11th century the great philosopher Dharmakirti of Sumatra, one of the teachers of Atisa, visited Lumbinī while on his pilgrimage through the Middle Land. The last person we know of to have visited the place until its rediscovery was King Ripumalla of the Karnamalla kingdom of western Nepal who came on a pilgrimage in the early 14th century. After that, Lumbinī was lost in the jungle until 1896. The first archaeological work was done here in 1899 and several times since then subsequent work has been carried out.

It was after U Thant, a devout Burmese Buddhist and Secretary-General of the United Nations, came here on a pilgrimage in 1967 that it was decided to develop Lumbinī. After years of delay, this plan is now being put into action and now the area is graced with gardens, temples

and pilgrim's rests built by several Buddhist countries and organizations. During the rainy season, when the atmosphere is clear, the pilgrim can get a magnificent view of the snowy peaks of both Dhaulagiri and Annapurna from Lumbinī.

What to See

Asoka's Pillar

The most ancient and most important monument in Lumbinī is the pillar erected by King Asoka. This pillar is 9.41 meters long although 4.75 meters of it is now below the surface. There is a crack down the whole shaft, probably the result of having been struck by lightning at some time in the past. Huien Tsiang says that a stone capital in the shape of a horse once capped the pillar and the worn stone that lies at its base even today is probably a fragment of this capital. The inscription on the pillar reads: 'Twenty years after his coronation, Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, visited this place and worshipped because here the Buddha, the sage of the Sakyans, was born. He had a stone figure and a pillar set up and because the Lord was born here, the village of Lumbinī was exempted from tax and required to pay only one eighth of the produce.' Near the top of the pillar is an inscription written by King Ripumalla of Nepal in 1312 which reads 'Om Mani Padme Hum! May Sri Ripumalla be victorious.'

New Excavations

Until recently a Hindu temple stood on the top of the large mound next to Asoka's pillar. Inside the temple was a damaged and much worn sculpture depicting Prince Siddhattha's birth and dating from the early Gupta period. The image of Mahā Māyā on this sculpture was worshipped by local people as a goddess variously known as Rūpadevi or Rumminidevi. In 1996 this temple was demolished so that archaeological investigations could be carried out. The foundations of a large brick structure 26 by 21 meters and with 15 chambers in it were found. In one of these chambers a large rock was found which Nepal's Department of Archaeology immediately announced marked the exact place where Prince Siddhattha was born. Until epigraphical or other evidence has been published to back up this startling claim, it will be hard to say whether it is genuine or just another attempt to keep Lumbinī in the news and thereby attract more visitors. These ruins have now been enclosed in a large building.

Tank

A little to the south of the temple is the tank in which legend says Mahā Māyā bathed after giving birth. In Huien Tsiang's time the water was 'clear and bright as a mirror and the surface covered with a mixture of flowers.


Mahendra Highway
Butwal
Mahendra Highway
NEPAL
Niglihawa
Taulihawa
Gotihawa
Bhairawa
Sonauli
Parasi
Lumbini
Nautanwa
Piprahwa
Ganwaria
(Kapilavatthu)
Birdpur
Rohini River
INDIA
LUMBINI
KAPILAVATTHU
AND
SURROUNDING AREA
To Naugarh
To Gorakhpur

Ruins

Beside the pool is a collection of ruined stupas and temples. The small number of antiquities that were discovered here during excavation indicate that Lumbinī continued to be a center of Buddhism right up till the 10th century. Two grassy mounds in the area, although sometimes circumambulated by pilgrims, are only piles of earth and broken bricks piled up during excavation done in 1933–34.

Modern Temples

A little to the east of the ruins are two modern temples. The first was built by Nepal's Theravadin Buddhist community and the second is a Tibetan temple of the Sakyapa sect. About a kilometer beyond Lumbinī is a beautiful new Stupa built by the Burmese government and a new Mahabodhi Society Resthouse.

How to Get There

Lumbinī is 18 kilometers west from Bhairawa (also spelt Bhairahwa and now officially renamed Sidhartha Nagar), the nearest large town in Nepal. From the Indian side of the border one can go from Gorakhpur by train or road, or from Naugarh by road crossing the border at Sonauli and proceeding via Bhairawa.

Around Lumbinī

There are a large number of unidentified mounds, ruins and antiquities in the vicinity of Lumbinī, several of them of interest to the pilgrim. About 22 kilometers west of Lumbinī is the village of Taulihawa, and a little to its north a collection of ruins called Tilaurakot which the Nepalese authorities insist is Kapilavatthu. The positive and indisputable identification of Piprāhwa with Kapilavatthu has now made such claims untenable. However, Taulihawa is a useful place from which to visit two other places of interest.

Niglihawa and Gotihawa

About six kilometers north of Taulihawa is a village called Niglihawa. Just outside the village is a tank on the western side of which lie two broken pieces of an Asokan pillar each with an inscription on it. The inscription on the smaller piece reads: 'Fourteen years after his coronation, Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, had the stupa of Konakamana Buddha enlarged to twice its size, and twenty years after his coronation, he came and had a stone pillar set up.' Konakamana is a different spelling for Konagamana, the second Buddha preceding Gotama Buddha. Asoka's inscription mentions a stupa and Huien Tsiang also mentions seeing such a stupa and a pillar with a lion capital, though no traces of the

Lumbinī

Lumbinī













stupa can be seen today. It is very likely that the pieces of the pillar have been moved from their original place. The inscription on the second segment of pillar mentions King Ripumalla's visit.

Four kilometers south-west of Taulihawa is a village called Gotihawa, in the middle of which is the broken stump of another Asokan pillar. It is believed that King Asoka raised this pillar to mark the birthplace of Kakusandha, the third Buddha preceding Gotama, but as no inscription has been found, this cannot be verified. Next to the pillar are the ruins of a stupa with a diameter of 22 meters dating from the Mauryan period.

How to Get There

Go to Taulihawa which is about 21 kilometers west of Lumbinī. From there head north to Bhawani Bhikchhu Chauk where the road turns off to Niglihawa, a distance of six kilometers. To get to Gotihawa take the road south from Taulihawa to Kudan and then turn off to Gotihawa, a distance of 4 kilometers. Alternatively you can go from Bhairawa 21 kilometers north to Butwal and then west along the Mahendra Highway to Gaursingha and from there to Taulihawa.

The Rohini River

The Sakyans' immediate neighbors to the east were the Koliyans who were closely related to them. The main Koliyan towns were Devadaha where the Buddha's mother was born and which is yet to be identified by archaeologists, and Ramagama, famous for its stupa and now identified with a mound thirteen kilometers southeast of Butwal. The Rohini River which continues to be called by this name even today marked the border between the Sakyans and the Koliyans. This river was the reason for one of the most dramatic events in the Buddha's life. The story is told in the Dhammapada Commentary. The Sakyans and the Koliyans had dammed the river in order to provide water for their crops. As the summer progressed it became clear that there would not be enough water for everybody. 'Talk grew bitter, one person struck another, the blow was returned, fighting broke out, and as they fought they cast aspersions upon the origin of the two royal families.' When the Sakyan and Koliyan nobles were informed of the insults that had been directed towards them, they strapped on their armor and took up their weapons determined to uphold their honor.

> 'As the Lord surveyed the world at dawn he saw his kinsmen and thought: "If I do not go, these men will destroy each other. It is my duty to go to them." He passed through the air to where his kinsmen were gathered, and seated himself cross-legged in the air in the middle of the Rohini River. When they saw him, the Lord's kinsmen threw down their weapons and worshipped him. Then the Lord said:

"What is this quarrel about, great kings?"

"We know not, reverend sir."

"Then who would know ?"

"The commander-in-chief of the army will know."

When asked, the commander-in-chief suggested the viceroy might know. Thus the Lord asked one after the other with none of them knowing the cause of the quarrel, until the laborers were asked. They replied:

"The quarrel is about the water."

Then the Lord said to the king:

"What is the value of water, great king ?"

"Very little, reverend sir."

"What is the value of a warrior ?"

"A warrior, reverend sir, is beyond price."

Then the Lord said: "It is not right that for a little water you should kill warriors who are beyond price." They were all silent. "Great kings, why do you act thus? Were I not here today, you would cause a river of blood to flow. Your actions are unworthy. You live in hatred, given to the five kinds of hatred. I live full of love. You live sick with passions. I live free from sickness. You live chasing after the five kinds of sense pleasures. I live in contentment."[3]

Exactly where on the Rohini River this event took place is not known today, but to sit on the sandy banks of the river and call to mind the Buddha's efforts to bring about reconciliation and peace can be a most moving experience.

How to Get There

The Rohini River lies directly east of Bhairawa on the road to Parasi. It is the second river one crosses. In 1989, the road was rough and unpaved.

KAPILAVATTHU

Lord, this Kapilavatthu is rich, prosperous, full of people, crowded with men and thickly populated. When I enter Kapilavatthu in the evening after having visited the Lord or the worthy monks, I meet with elephants, horses, chariots, carts and people all swaying and rolling along.[1]

Kapilavatthu was the chief town of the Sakyans and the place where Prince Siddhattha spent the first 30 years of his life. Centuries before the Buddha's time, King Okkāka expelled his oldest sons so that on his death he could give the throne to his youngest son. The exiled princes made their home near the foot of the Himalayas beside a lotus pond in a grove of saka trees (*Tectonia grandis*), a type of teak. When King Okkāka asked his ministers where his sons had gone, they told him and he exclaimed: 'They are as strong as sakas these princes, they are real Sakyans.' This, according to legend, is how the Sakyans got their name. Near the princes' new home was the hermitage of the sage Kapila and so they called their settlement Kapilavatthu. Later Buddhist literature describes the Buddha's father as a great king and Kapilavatthu as a magnificent city. In fact, Suddhodana was more like a senior Sakyan chief while Kapilavatthu was probably a small town built around Suddhodana's manor house.

The Buddha's first return to his home town after his enlightenment was very eventful. He shocked his father by begging in the streets, he preached to large crowds, and many of the Sakyans ordained as monks.[2] Of course not everyone was impressed. Dandapāni asked the Buddha to explain his Dhamma, but on hearing it he went away 'shaking his head, wagging his tongue, with his brow creased into three wrinkles.'[3] On another of his visits to Kapilavatthu, the Buddha was invited to open the new assembly hall. 'Carpets were spread on the floor, seats were got ready, water vessels were put out and oil lamps were hung up. The Buddha washed his feet before entering, sat down against the central pillar facing the east, and gave a talk that went far into the night.'[4] One of the Buddha's most enthusiastic patrons was Mahānāma, to whom several of the Buddha's discourses were addressed. Once Mahānāma visited the Buddha at the Nigrodhārāma, but as he was recovering from an illness at the time, Ānanda spoke on his behalf.[5]

Kapilavatthu was destroyed sometime before the Buddha's final Nirvana. The Sakya country was a semi-autonomous republic within the kingdom of Kosala, and at one time, Pasenadi, the king of Kosala, decided to strengthen his influence amongst the Sakyans by marrying a Sakyan noble woman. The idea of having one of their own marrying outside the tribe horrified the proud Sakyans but they could hardly ignore the wishes of their powerful

neighbor. Mahānāma came up with a solution—he had fathered a daughter named Vasabhakhattiya by a slave woman and suggested this girl be given in marriage to King Pasenadi. The ploy worked: the slave girl was accepted as a Sakyan noblewoman, taken to Sāvatthī, married into the Kosalan royal family, and eventually gave birth to a son who was named Vidūdabha. When Vidūdabha grew up, he wished to visit what he thought were his relatives in Kapilavatthu, but his mother discouraged him from going, as she knew that the Sakyans would be unable to bring themselves to treat him with respect. Eventually he went and was bewildered by the cool reception he received. After leaving, one of Vidūdabha's retinue returned to retrieve a forgotten weapon and saw a slave woman washing the seat which Vidūdabha had sat upon with milk and contemptuously referring to him as the offspring of a slave. When he inquired what she meant, she told him. When the whole story got to Vidūdabha, he was furious and vowed revenge: 'Let them pour milk over my seat to purify it. When I am king, I will wash the place with the blood of their hearts.' And so it was. On three occasions, Vidūdabha set out with an army to seek his revenge on the Sakyans, but each time the Buddha was able to avert disaster. But eventually Vidūdabha got his way—large numbers of the Sakyans were massacred and Kapilavatthu was razed. According to the *Mahāvamsa Tīkā,* the surviving Sakyans fled into the hills where they built a town called Mariyanagara.

When Fa Hien came, the place was nearly deserted: 'All was mound and desolation. Of inhabitants, there were only some monks and a score or two of families of common people. At the spot where the old palace of Suddhodana stood, there have been made images of the prince and his mother.' He was shown small stupas marking the places where important events in Prince Siddhattha's early life occurred. Fa Hien also mentions the distance and direction of Lumbinī from Kapilavatthu. The sight that confronted Huien Tsiang when he visited Kapilavatthu was similar. 'The capitol is overgrown and in ruins. Its circuit cannot be accurately measured. The royal precincts within the city measure some 14 or 15 li round. They were all built of brick. The foundation walls are still strong and high. It has been long deserted. The inhabited villages are few and far between.'

Like Fa Hien, Huien Tsiang also gives the distance he had to go and the direction he had to head to get to Kapilavatthu. It seems that after its destruction, Kapilavatthu was never fully rebuilt or inhabited again. The surrounding forests swallowed up agricultural land, the population declined, and it was only the few devout monks who lived there and the pilgrims who came to visit from time to time that kept the town alive. However there must have been at least intermittent habitation for we read of a monk living there in the fourth century who repaired one of Kapilavatthu's stupas with funds provided by the king of Sri Lanka. As Buddhism declined in India and the stream of pilgrims dried up, the forest closed in and Kapilavatthu was lost.

Towards the end of the 19th century, most of the sites associated with the Buddha's life had been discovered, all that is except Kapilavatthu. With the gradual clearing of the forests on the India-Nepal border, a number of mounds, obviously the remains of ancient habitations, came to light, and scholars began to speculate about which of them might be Kapilavatthu. In 1858, Lassen suggested that the remains of the town might be at a site a few kilometers from Gorakhpur.

After his successful identification of Sāvatthī in 1863, Cunningham, using the itineraries of the Chinese pilgrims, declared that Kapilavatthu was at Nagarkhas, one of the few times he turned out to be wrong. A.C.L. Carlleyle, one of Cunningham's assistants, surveyed Basti and Gorakhpur districts in 1875–76 in a determined effort to settle the question once and for all, and came to the conclusion that a place called Bhuiladih must be Kapilavatthu. By this time, the professional jealousies of scholars had been excited and a race developed to be the first to rediscover Kapilavatthu.

In 1896, A. Fuhrer discovered Asoka's pillar marking the Buddha's birthplace at Lumbinī, a momentous discovery in itself, but as the Chinese pilgrims had also given the direction and distance of Lumbinī from Kapilavatthu, that meant that the identification of the town was imminent. Fuhrer declared: 'The discovery of the Asoka Edict Pillar in the Lumbinī grove at Rumindei enabled me to fix also, with absolute certainty, the site of Kapilavatthu and the sanctuaries in its neighborhood.' Titaurakot, a collection of ruins in Nepal 22 kilometers northwest of Lumbinī, Fuhrer proclaimed, was Kapilavatthu, although some scholars disputed the claim.

The year 1897 saw Fuhrer again fighting his way through the jungle, looking for evidence to prove his claim. As none could be found, he decided to manufacture it. He excavated, or rather demolished, some structures near Tilaurakot and claimed that they were the stupas built over the remains of the Sakyans who had been massacred by Vidūdabha. He was busily carving pre-Mauryan letters on some of the bricks, which, if genuine, would have proved his case conclusively, when the famous historian Vincent Smith turned up and caught him in the act.

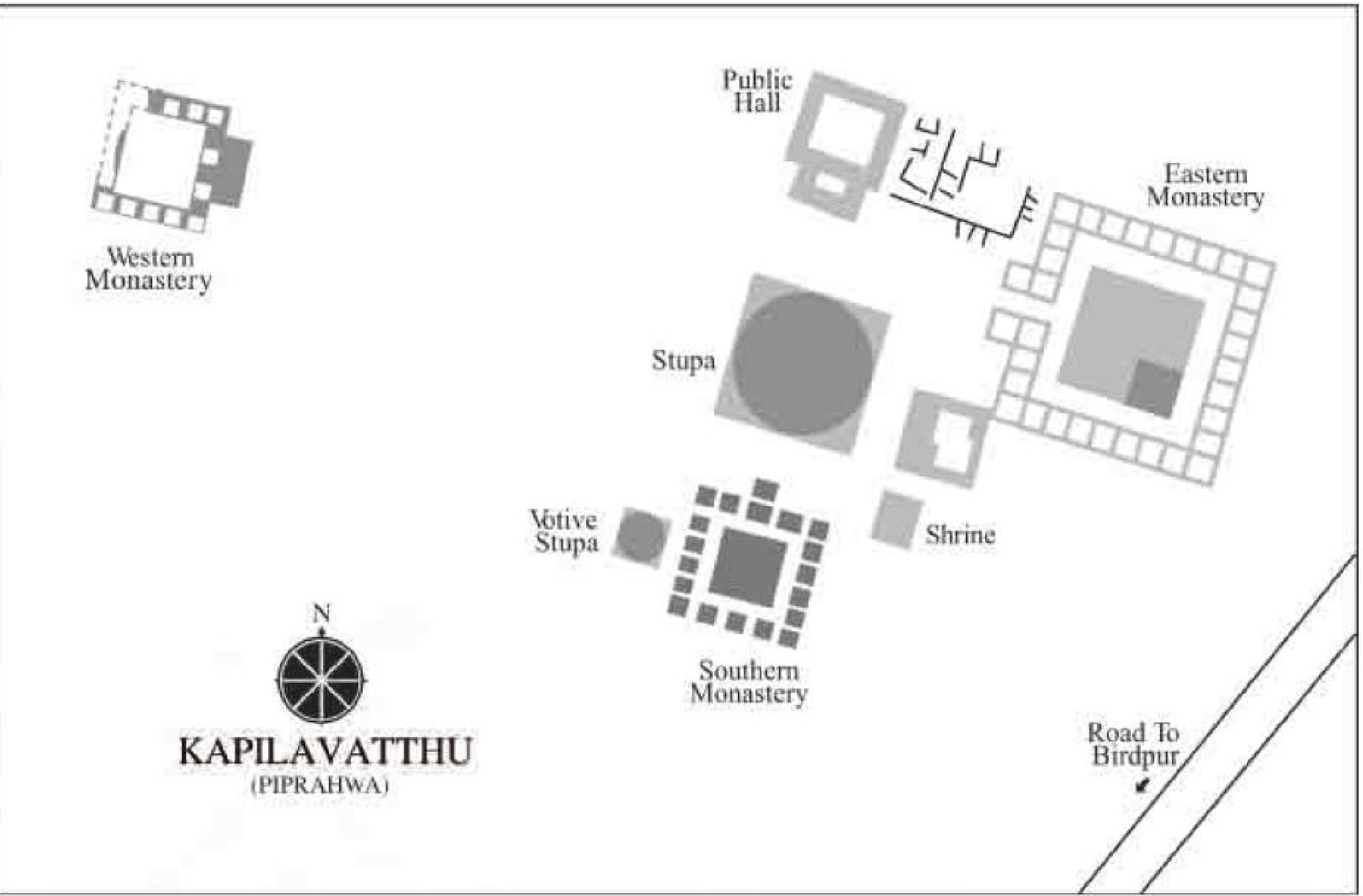
In 1898 an English landlord, W.C. Peppé, dug a deep shaft into the middle of what he thought was a stupa near the village of Piprāhwa on the Indian side of the border about 13 kilometers from Lumbinī. He found a huge stone box weighing 669 kilograms and when he lifted the lid a most amazing sight awaited him. Inside was a tiny crystal casket with a beautifully carved fish as a handle, and containing golden stars, a soapstone casket, dishes, vases and numerous other items. But the most spectacular find was a second soapstone casket 15 centimeters high with letters inscribed on it. The inscription reads: *'Sukiti bhatinam sa-bhaginikanam-sa-puta-dalana iyam salila-nidhane Buddhasa bhagavate Sakyinam.'*

When scholars later deciphered the inscription, which remains the earliest decipherable writing ever found in India, two different translations were posited. The first was that the burnt bones within the casket were those of the Buddha, placed there by the Sakyan Sukiti, his brothers, sisters, sons and wives. The second was that the bones were those of the relations of the Buddha, the Sakyan Sukiti, his brothers, sisters, sons and wives. The first meaning has now been established with certainty, but at that time the two different possible meanings only kept the controversy about Kapilavatthu alive. If the bones were those of the Buddha, some scholars said, then the Piprāhwa stupa must be the one built by the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu. If they were the bones of the Sakyans massacred by Vidūdabha, then the stupa was probably situated at the place the Sakyans settled after Kapilavatthu was destroyed.

Adding to the difficulty was the fact that the location of the town given by Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang seemed to be quite different. The great Buddhist scholar, T.W. Rhys Davids, came up with a rather strange solution. Perhaps, he suggested, Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang had been shown two different Kapilavatthus. Perhaps Tilaurakot was the original Kapilavatthu and Piprāhwa was the new Kapilavatthu built after the original town's destruction. And so the debate continued, attracting less and less interest as time went by.

Then in 1970, Venerable Dharmakirti of Naugarh wrote to Mrs Indira Gandhi, describing the neglected state of Piprāhwa and appealing for its excavation and restoration. The letter was forwarded to the Director General of the Archaeological Survey with a note that immediate action should be taken. The motives behind this move were not entirely disinterested. For some time Nepal had been insisting that Kapilavatthu was in its territory. If the controversy over the exact location of Kapilavatthu could be settled once and for all, and if the question could be settled in India's favor, national pride and the already large number of Japanese pilgrims who were coming to India would both receive a considerable boost. Excavation at Piprāhwa started in January 1971 under the direction of K.M. Srivastava. In 1973, after a series of extremely exciting finds, a sealing was unearthed which included the name 'Kapilavastthu.' More such sealings were subsequently unearthed, leaving no doubt that Prince Siddhattha's hometown had at last been discovered.

The remains of Kapilavatthu are in two locations, Ganwaria and Piprāhwa, about a kilometer from each other. The former represents the actual town of Kapilavatthu, and although structures dating from the Buddha's time have been found, being made of timber and mud, most of these have been obliterated by the frequent inundations that have affected the area since ancient times. Piprāhwa represents the religious center that grew up around the stupa the Sakyans built to enshrine the Buddha's relics. The distance between the two sites may be due to the stupa having been built at one of the parks donated to the Buddha, like the


Western Monastery
Public Hall
Eastern Monastery
Stupa
Votive Stupa
Shrine
Southern Monastery
N
KAPILAVATTHU
(PIPRAHWA)
Road To Birdpur

Nigrodhārāma, which are known to have been some distance from the town.

What to See

Sakyan's Stupa

The most important structure at Kapilavatthu is the main stupa. Excavations conducted in 1971 revealed that the stupa was first built in the 5th century BCE and enlarged at two later dates. The first and earliest stupa was made from baked bricks and consisted of a simple dome with a 5 meter wide brick-paved processional path around it. In the center of the stupa, at ground level, were two brick chambers adjoining each other. The northern chamber contained a beautifully lathed soapstone casket 12 centimeters high, and two dishes. The southern chamber contained a similar, larger casket 16 centimeters high, and two more dishes. Both caskets, when opened, were found to contain fragments of charred human bone. The date, location and contents of these caskets make it almost certain that the charred bones are the corporeal remains of the Buddha, which had been given to the Sakyans. These precious relics together with the caskets are now displayed in a special display case in the National Museum in New Delhi.[6]

The second stupa was built about 150 years later, after leveling the dome of the first. The dome of this stupa was 19 meters in diameter and had a 1.52 meter wide projection around its base. It was from this stupa that Peppe recovered the famous inscribed casket. Having found the huge stone box with the casket in it, he assumed that there were no more relics and thus dug no deeper, missing the other two older caskets only a few meters further down.

The third stupa, with its dome 23 meters in diameter, was considerably larger than the earlier ones and had a square base with sides 23.5 meters long added. Peppé found a casket in this stupa also, but it had been smashed into tiny fragments. It is this third stupa that the pilgrim sees today. Apart from its historical importance, the Sakyan's stupa is of interest for several other reasons. The earliest stupa showed no signs of having been opened after its construction, thus suggesting that the legend about King Asoka opening all but the Ramagama stupa may not be entirely true. It is possible that he left the stupa at Kapilavatthu untouched out of respect for the Sakyans. The stupa also displays the various stages of development that such monuments usually went through. The earliest structure was small and simple, and was added to over time, gradually becoming larger and more complex. Thus many stupas display the onion effect–one structure encased within another larger, later one.

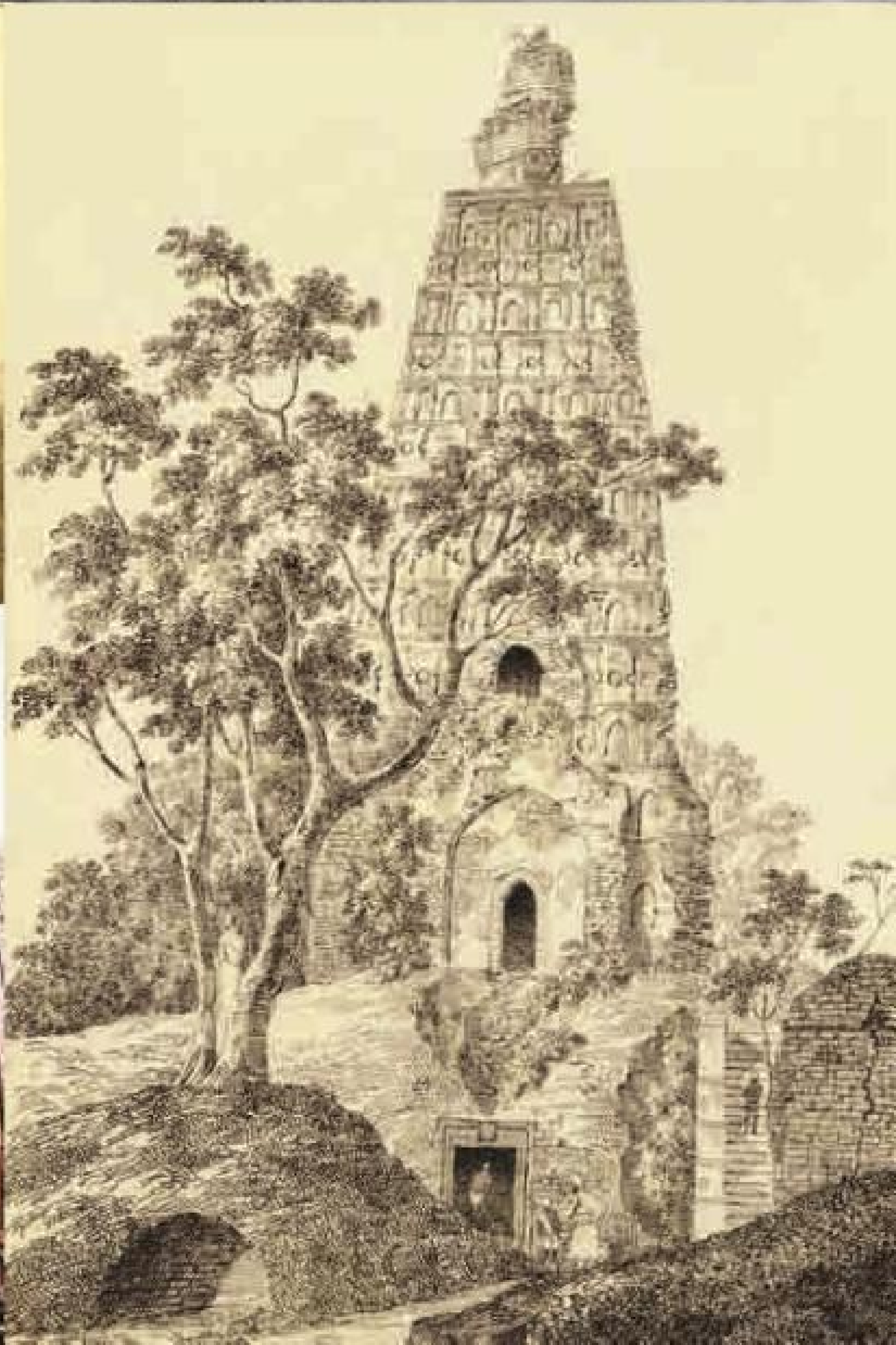
Kapilavatthu





Bodh Gayā







Eastern Monastery

A little to the east of the stupa are the ruins of a large monastery. A seal found in this monastery had the words '*Kapilavatthu Bhikkhu Sangha*' on it, proving conclusively that Piprāhwa and the surrounding ruins were the site of the Buddha's hometown. It also pointed to the monastery having been built by King Kanishka. The monastery consists of 31 cells built around a courtyard; the larger rooms on either end of the eastern side were probably storerooms, while the others would have provided accommodation for monks. The monastery had steps at its entrance and a drain, probably a urinal, with its outlet on the northeast corner.

Other Ruins

Other ruins in the area consist of what is believed to be a public hall a little to the north of the main stupa, a small votive stupa and monastery on its south side, and another monastery some distance to the west.

Salargarh and Ganwaria

There are numerous ruins around Kapilavatthu but only two of them have ever been excavated. About 200 meters to the east of Piprāhwa through the fields at a place called Salargarh are the remains of a small monastery and stupa all surrounded by a wall. It seems to have been inhabited between the 2^{nd} century BCE and the 2^{nd} century CE. About a kilometer south of Piprāhwa is another collection of ruins probably representing the actual town of Kapilavatthu. The mound marking the town is extensive, although much of it is now used for cultivation. Excavation has shown that the town was occupied from 800 BCE up to the end of the Kushāna period, about 300 CE. Today one can see two large monasteries and a collection of secular structures, most of them built after the first century CE.

How to Get There

Kapilavatthu is 8 kilometers from Birdpur, which is connected by a good road to Naugarh, the nearest town of any size. Naugarh can be reached by train or bus from Gorakhpur.

BODH GAYĀ

Then being a quester for the good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path of peace, while walking on tour through Magadha I arrived at Uruvelā, the army township. There I saw a beautiful stretch of ground, a lovely woodland grove, a clear flowing river with a beautiful ford with a village nearby for support. And I thought: 'Indeed, this is a good place for a young man set on striving.' So I sat down there, thinking: 'Indeed, this is a good place for striving.'[1]

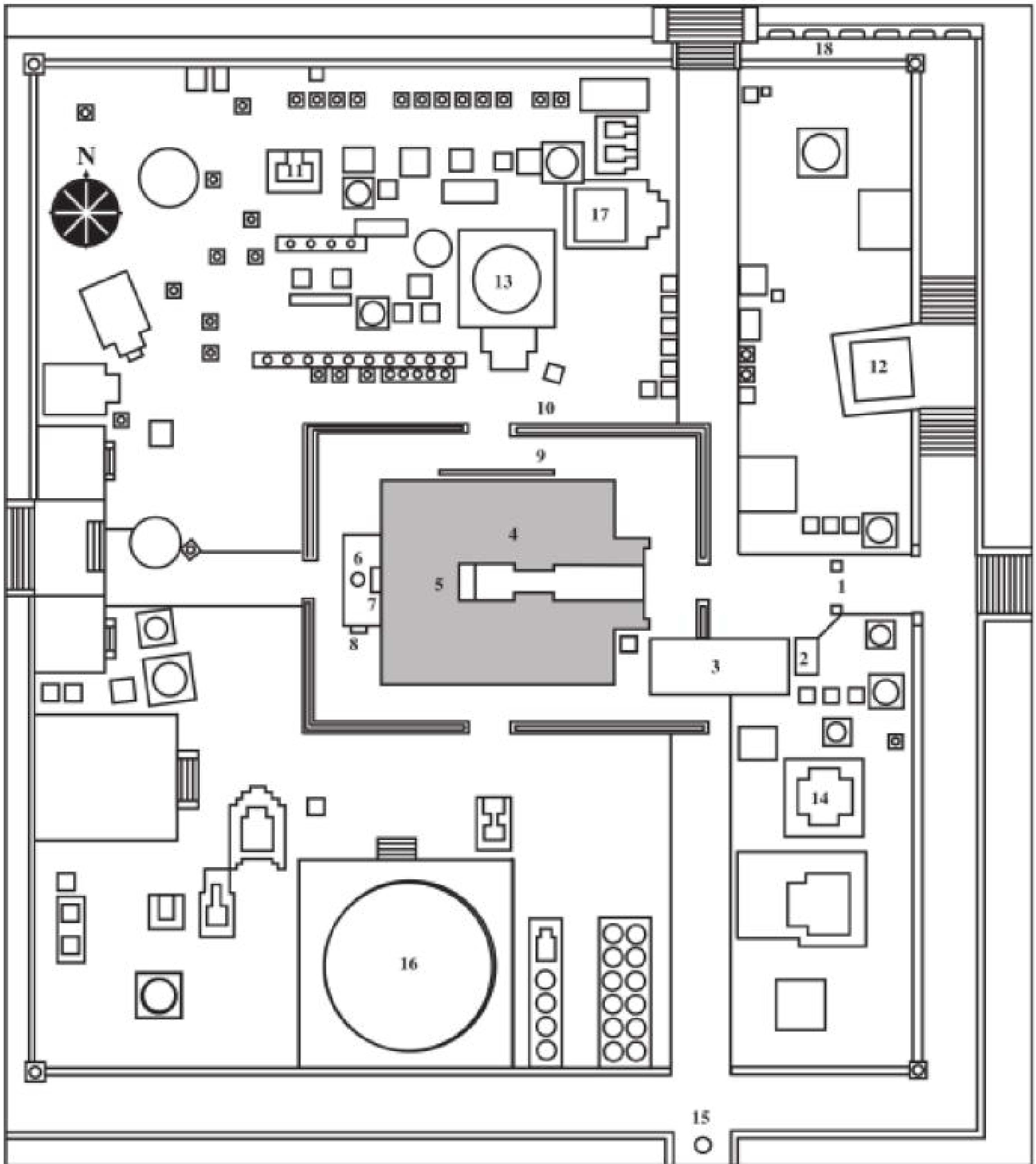
In 528 BCE, after six years of learning under different teachers and experimenting with self-mortification, Prince Siddhattha arrived on the outskirts of the small village of Uruvelā in Magadha. Like most Indian villages even today, Uruvelā had a tree-shrine at which people would worship in the hope of having their wishes fulfilled, and it was under this tree that Prince Siddhattha sat and began his meditation. He probably chose this particular locality because, unlike the fearful forests where he had lived in the recent past, the environment around Uruvelā was sylvan and non-threatening. And he probably chose to meditate at the foot of this particular tree because he knew that, sooner or later, someone would come to worship, see him, and probably bring him food.

A *Jātaka* describes the Bodhimanda, the area around the Bodhi Tree, prior to the Buddha's enlightenment as being a smooth area of silver sand without a blade of grass growing on it and with all the surrounding trees and flowering shrubs bending, as if in homage, towards the Bodhi Tree.[2] As he sat meditating, his mind disciplined and purified by years, even lifetimes, of practising the Perfections (*pāramī*), he exerted himself one final time to overcome the last traces of doubt, ignorance and desire.

The Striving Sutta (*Padhāna Sutta*) from the *Sutta Nipāta* and many later Buddhist literary works describe this final struggle allegorically as a battle against Māra, the personification of evil.[3] Having 'defeated Māra and his army,' the highest wisdom arose in his mind and Prince Siddhattha became the Buddha, the Fully Enlightened One.

The Buddha spent the next seven weeks in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree, experiencing the joy of enlightenment and contemplating the implications of the truths he had realized, after which he set off for Sārnāth. He returned later that year and converted three eminent ascetics who lived in the area, Gayā Kassapa, Nadī Kassapa and Uruvelā Kassapa.[4] After that, he set out to proclaim his Dhamma to the world, apparently never to return to Uruvelā again.

According to the Pali commentators, Uruvelā took its name from the large amount of sand (*vale*) in the area. However, so momentous



MAHABODHI TEMPLE

1. Gateway
2. Buddhapada Temple
3. Hindu Temple
4. Mahābodhi Temple
5. Vajirāsana
6. Bodhi Tree
7. Outer Vajirāsana
8. Stone Footprints
9. Ratanacankama Cetiya
10. Railing
11. Ratanagaha Cetiya
12. Animisa Cetiya
13. Animisa Cetiya (According to Huien Tsiang)
14. South East Shrine
15. Pillar
16. Asoka's Stupa
17. Mahānāma's Shrine
18. Outer Wall of Mahābodhi Monastery

was the event that took place here that this name was soon discarded, replaced by several other names evocative of that event. Speaking of his pilgrimage to the place in 260 BCE, King Asoka says he 'went to Sambodhi' (*ayaya sambodhim*). In later times, it was known as Mahābodhi, Bodhimanda or simply Vajirāsana (Diamond Throne), while the name Bodh Gayā seems to have been used for the first time in about the 18th century, probably simply to distinguish the place from Gayā, which was sometimes called Brahma Gayā.

The first shrine at Bodh Gayā may have consisted of the Bodhi Tree with a stone slab at its foot surrounded by a wooden railing. Tradition ascribes the first substantial temple to King Asoka, and although there is no definite evidence to support this tradition, there is every reason to suppose that a devout Buddhist like Asoka would have built a temple at such a sacred place. A relief from the railing of the Bhārhut Stupa and dating from about 100 BCE gives a good idea of what this early temple at Bodh Gayā looked like. A two-storied structure with a gabled roof is built around the Bodhi Tree and is supported by polygonal pillars. Inside, a slab of stone, the Vajirāsana, can be seen with the decorated trunk of the Bodhi Tree and two Tiratana symbols behind it. The Vajirāsana has flowers strewn on it which two devotees have just offered, an umbrella projects from the Bodhi Tree, while garlands are suspended from its branches. Two more worshippers whistle and wave their shawls and above them two devas join in the devotions, the one on the left by throwing blossoms and the one on the right by offering a garland. Around the temple is a railing and just beyond it a pillar with an elephant capital erected by King Asoka. This temple, which seems to have been called Vajirāsana Gandhakuti, may have stood for several centuries, being repaired and added to from time to time.

Much of the history of Bodh Gayā is known from the donatory inscriptions, graffiti and, to a lesser extent, literary accounts of the many pilgrims who visited throughout the centuries. These written records tell us as much about the pilgrims themselves as they do about the place. Many pilgrims came alone, one at least seems to have come with his wife and child, sometimes groups of friends traveled together, some came alone from distant lands only to meet a fellow-countryman when they arrived. There were proud princes who made lavish offerings and, in one case at least, a humble monk who mentions that due to a shortage of funds, he could not make offerings in the way he would have liked. Almost all those who built shrines, donated statues or performed pūjās did so expressing the deep desire that their act of devotion would benefit themselves and all others. After the building of the first proper temple, the next major construction at Bodh Gayā was the stone railing, probably replacing an earlier wooden one, erected in about 100 BCE. This extensively decorated structure, parts of which can still be seen in the museum, was the gift of a group of ladies from the courts of King Indragnimitra

and King Brahmamitra. Perhaps fifty or a hundred years later, one Bodhirakshita of Sri Lanka donated a crossbar for the railing, apparently to replace the one which had been broken. He is the first pilgrim we know of to have come to Bodh Gayā from beyond India. During the Kushāna period, the first Buddha statues were set up at Bodh Gayā. Several of these were quite large, from three to 4 meters high, and judging from the fine pink-beige sandstone from which they were made and from their style, they were probably manufactured at Madhurā.

In 383 CE, a monk and one of his female supporters donated two statues, one of the Buddha and another of the Bodhisattva, the first of which has the donatory inscription on it. The inscription reads: 'In the year 64, on the 5th day of the 3rd month, during the reign of the great King Trikamala, just prior to this, the monk who was an upholder of the Vinaya, set up, by his own strength, stone images of the Buddha and Bodhisattva, both with lion pedestals. With the aid of the Buddhist lay woman who was a helper in this noble act of piety ... was done by the teacher of Dhamma. Let the merit springing from this act of piety be shared by mother and father, beginning with the preceptor...'

In the 4th century CE, the king of Sri Lanka, Sri Meghavanna (304–332 CE), had a monastery built at Bodh Gayā which in time came to have control over the running of the Mahābodhi Temple. Huien Tsiang saw this monastery three hundred years later and described it thus: 'Outside the northern gate of the wall of the Bodhi Tree is the Mahabodhi Monastery. It was built by a former king of Simhala. This edifice has six halls with towers three stories high, and a wall of defense thirty or forty feet high surrounds it. The utmost skill of the artist has been employed; the ornamentation is of the richest colors. The statue of the Buddha is cast in gold and silver, and is decorated with gems and precious stones. The stupas are high and large in proportion and beautifully ornamented; they contain relics of the Buddha.'

Huien Tsiang tells us that the king built this monastery after his brother, who was a monk, went on a pilgrimage to India and found it difficult to get accommodation in the Indian temples. He also tells us that an inscription set up in the monastery read: 'To help all without distinction is the highest teachings of all the Buddhas.' This Sri Lankan monastery was still functioning in the 13th century when Dharmasvāmin visited and its policy of offering hospitality to all seems to have been maintained. The Mahabodhi Monastery was directly north of the temple and now lies under the large mound that extends from the Mahant's residence to the back of the Mahabodhi Society Resthouse and the Tibetan temple. The main building of the monastery was excavated by Cunningham and Beglar in 1885. It was found to be a huge structure, 15 meters square with walls three meters thick, towers on the four corners and a pillared courtyard in the middle. A drain led from the courtyard to the outer walls and ended in a richly carved makhara which was in the

museum but stolen several years ago. Surrounding the monastery and about 92 meters from it, was a huge wall with 16 towers. The stairs leading to the Mahābodhi Temple on the north side and the wall with arched niches beside it were a part of the outermost wall of this great monastery and are the only traces of it that can still be seen.

It was soon after the introduction of Buddhism into Vietnam in the 6th century that the first pilgrims from that region began visiting India. Two monks named Khuy Sung and Minh Vien took a ship via Sri Lanka to a port on the west coast of India and then went by foot to the Middle Land. After visiting Bodh Gayā the two companions headed for Rājagaha after which Khuy Sung became sick and died. He was only 25 years old.

Exactly who built the present Mahābodhi Temple, and when, is something of a mystery. Fa Hien did not mention seeing any temple during his visit to Bodh Gayā at the beginning of the 4th century CE, but it was there, substantially the same as it is today, when Huien Tsiang came early in the 7th century. It was probably built in the first half of the 4th century. Huien Tsiang says that two brothers built the temple in fulfillment of a vow, but it would seem that the resources needed for the building of a structure so large would only be available to a king. Either way, no donatory inscription related to the building of the temple has ever been found. Huien Tsiang the two niches on either side of the main entrance describes the temple as it existed at his time thus: 'To the east of the Bodhi Tree, there is a temple about 160 or 170 feet high. Its lower foundation wall is twenty or more paces wide in front. The building is of blue bricks covered with plaster, all the niches in the different stories hold golden figures. The four sides of the building are covered with wonderful ornamental work; in one place figures of stringed pearls, in another, figures of heavenly beings. The whole is surrounded by a gilded copper *amalaka* fruit. The eastern face adjoins a storied pavilion, the projecting eaves of which rise, one over the other, to the height of three distinct chambers; its projecting eaves, its pillars, beams, doors and windows are decorated with gold and silver ornamental work, with pearls and gems let in to fill up interstices. Its somber chambers and mysterious halls have doors in each of the three stories. To the right and left of the outside gate are niche-like chambers; in the left is a figure of Avalokitesvara and in the right a figure of Maitreya. They are made of white silver and are about 10 feet high.'

The Gupta period saw the construction of a number of smaller shrines in the precincts around the Mahābodhi Temple. Judging by the donatory inscriptions referring to the erection of these shrines, many of them must have been beautifully adorned, although today only their foundations remain. One such inscription, found on the pedestal of a Buddha statue which must have originally been a part of one of the aforementioned shrines, reads: 'This most ornamental, excellent and lofty temple was constructed by Bodhisena, a monk, pure-minded, delighting


Bodh Gayā



Bodh Gayā

in the way of perfect wisdom and an inhabitant of Dattgalla, for the Sage, He who is compassionate to all beings and who defeated Māra, for the unloosening of the fetters of the world, for his parents, relations, teachers and all the inhabitants of Ahavagra.'

In 588 CE, a monk called Mahānāma came from Sri Lanka and built a shrine with a Buddha statue, the remains of which can still be seen near the northern staircase leading to the temple. In the inscription which was found in the shrine, Mahānāma names the great teacher whose lineage he was a part of, and then proceeds to describe the shrine he had built and his altruistic motives in doing so:

'His (the teacher's) disciple greater still, he whose excellent name is Mahānāma, an inhabitant of Amaradvīpa, a very ocean of a mighty family, born in the island of Lanka, delighting in the welfare of others, by him this beautiful shrine of the Teacher of Mankind who overcame the power of Māra, dazzling white as the rays of the moon, with an open pavilion on all sides, has been caused to be built at the exalted Bodhimanda. By means of this appropriate action, may mankind, freed from attachment to worldly things, having dispelled mental darkness, and like a beacon, having no clinging, enjoy the supreme happiness of perfect wisdom. As long as the sun, the dispeller of darkness, shines in all directions with diffused rays, as long as the ocean full to its boundaries with waves that are curved like the hoods of cobras and as long as Mount Sumeru, the abode of Indra, has its summit made beautiful by diverse jeweled slabs so as to be full of luster, so long let this shrine of the great saint be everlasting. The year 200, 60 and 9 on the 7th day, of the bright fortnight in the month of Caitra.'

This inscription, written in Sanskrit, can now be seen in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. The statue that Mahānāma had placed in the shrine has also been found, as has another statue donated by two Sri Lankan monks, Dharmagupta and Dharmatrasena, who are thought to have accompanied Mahānāma on his pilgrimage.

A hundred or perhaps 200 years after Mahānāma, another Sri Lankan, this time a layman named Udayasri, set up a Buddha statue at Bodh Gayā and 'honored it as he would the Lord.' On the pedestal of this statue is a kneeling figure holding a garland, probably Udayasri, and figures of a woman and a boy, perhaps Udayasri's family. Dating from about the same time is an inscription written on the railing around the temple by yet another Sri Lankan pilgrim, Prakhyatakirti. This devout monk not only built a shrine, he repaired the Mahābodhi Temple and made provision to have a lamp burn perpetually within it, made practical gifts to the Sangha, and performed a pūjā for the peace of the world. The inscription, parts of which are damaged, is written on two separate stones of the railing. The first part reads: 'The virtuous monk, Prakhyatakirtti, being a descendent of the rulers of the island of Lanka, is like a moon in the firmament of his family. This monk, through devotion, wishing to attain Buddhahood,

caused to be performed acts of worship at the (shrine of) Three Jewels for the peace of all humankind. Whatever merit has been acquired by me through this act, let it be for the enlightenment of... Let that very auspicious reward be shared by ...'

The second part reads: 'A shrine has been built where the great Vajirāsana Temple is. The temple itself has been adorned with a new coating of plaster and paint at a cost of 250 dinaras. And in the temple, a lamp of ghee has been provided for Lord Buddha from the income derived from the gift of a hundred cows, for as long as the moon, the sun and the stars shall endure. Also from the income of another hundred cows the cost of small perpetually recurring repairs to the temple and the cost of providing another lamp of ghee to be burnt daily before the image inside the temple, has been met. (From the income of yet) another hundred cows provision has been made for having a lamp of ghee burn before the brass image of Lord Buddha in the (Sri Lankan) monastery ... A perpetual endowment of a lamp of ghee has been made for the benefit of the monastery. There also a large water reservoir has been dug for the use of the noble congregation of monks, and to the east of it a new field has been laid out. Whatever merit may have been acquired by me from all this, may it be for the benefit of my parents at first ...' This inscription is now in the Indian Museum in Kolkata.

During the long reign of the Pāla kings of Bengal, the Mahābodhi Temple received lavish patronage. In fact most of the statues and stupas that can still be seen in and around the temple date from this period. Several inscriptions mention Pāla kings as having made gifts and endowments as did kings from other parts of India. King Sri Purnabhadra of the Sindh built a temple with three images and King Tunga of Rashtrakuta erected a temple 'like unto a flight of steps into heaven.' The Pāla period also saw a flood of pilgrims coming from China. In an inscription dating from about 1000 CE, the monk Chi I tells us he had vowed to exhort thirty thousand people to prepare themselves by their conduct to be reborn in the heaven realm and to this end he distributed thirty thousand Dharma books. He says he then traveled to India with three other monks to see the Vajirāsana and again vowed to continue his travels until he had visited all the sacred places. This inscription was found carved on a block of stone below a row of seven standing Buddhas and one Maitreya, all with different hand gestures.

In 1011, the great Bengali teacher Atisa, who was later to play a crucial role in the resurgence of Buddhism in Tibet, took his higher ordination at one of Bodh Gayā's monasteries. Around this time also, the famous Tibetan translator, Rinchen Sangpo (958–1051), came to Bodh Gayā to complete the studies he had began in Kashmir. His biographer tells us that he made offerings at the northern gate that led to the Mahābodhi Temple. All this suggests that Bodh Gayā was an important center for learning and scholarship as much as for pilgrimage. In 1021, another

party of intrepid Chinese monks arrived in Bodh Gayā and set up monuments to commemorate their visits. One of them, Yum-shu, composed a long devotional poem in praise of the Buddha and had it inscribed on a large stone tablet. The first part of the inscription reads: 'I, Yum-shu, having come from my distant homeland to gaze upon the land of the Buddha and then having seen with my own eyes the miraculous footprint, was I not respectfully to offer my homage in glorification of my Teacher? I therefore collected together what money I could spare and some thirty paces north from the Bodhi Tree I raised a stone to the ten thousand Buddhas.' After the poem, Yum-shu adds a postscript: 'There went with me to worship in the land of the Buddha the two monks, I-ching and I-un, from the Monastery of the Established Doctrine in the main street of the Eastern Capital, who each took with him a gold embroidered robe to be placed on the shrine of Mahābodhi and each set up his own memorial tablet in perpetual memory thereof.' This interesting inscription, and the other one set up by Yum-shu's companions, are both now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata.

Only a year after Yum-shu and his fellow monks were in Bodh Gayā, another Chinese pilgrim arrived. This monk, named Ho Yun, carved a stupa out of stone and placed it thirty paces north of the Bodhi Tree. He also said he wished to inscribe an entire sacred scripture on stone, but as he was short of funds he was unable to do so. Whether these and the several other Chinese monks who visited Bodh Gayā around this time survived the long and dangerous journey back to their homeland has not been recorded. They are known to history only because of their acts of faith. According to Tibetan sources, the teacher and administrator I Ce btsun went to Bodh Gayā in about 1030 to get a statue, which he brought back to Tibet with him and enshrined in the famous Shalu Temple.

The year 1098 saw the beginning of what was to be a long relationship between the Buddhists of Burma and Bodh Gayā. By that time the Mahābodhi Temple was at least 600 years old and was in need of major repairs. Either on his own initiative or at the request of others, King Kyanzittha sent a mission to the Middle Land to carry out these repairs, the details of which are recorded in an inscription at the Shwehsandow Pagoda in Prome: 'The king gathered together gems of diverse kinds and sent them in a ship to repair the holy temple at Bodh Gayā and to offer lights which should burn forever and ever.'

Three inscriptions dating from the last half of the 12th century indicate that considerable building actively took place at this time under the auspices of King Asokavalla of Siwalik, in western Nepal. The first of these inscriptions records the gift made by Prince Dasaratha, a younger brother of King Asokavalla 'a follower of the excellent Mahayana school, a true devotee and a lamp amongst the assembly of nobles.' The second inscription records the building of a shrine to the Buddha 'graceful and

like a hall of emancipation and bliss' by one of King Asokavalla's feudatory chiefs. The inscription also states that 'the Buddha's dispensation is in decay' and that it was written 'in a great hurry by Indranandi, a writer of great fame, and carved on stone by the engraver Rāma.' The third and largest inscription was found built into the wall of a temple in Gayā although it must have originally been set up at Bodh Gayā. It records that Asokavalla, at the request of his Kashmiri teacher, built a shrine at Bodh Gayā and arranged to have offerings made regularly at the shrine.

The beginning of the 13th century saw much of the Middle Land in turmoil due to its invasion by the Muslims. Of course, armies had been marching back and forth throughout the northern plains for centuries, and although the more richly endowed Hindu or Buddhist temples were sometimes looted by undisciplined soldiers or kings desperate for funds to carry on their campaigns, this was the exception. But the marauding soldiers who now appeared were different from those who had come before. They destroyed temples, defaced statues and murdered monks and priests not for loot but out of a fierce religious jealousy incomprehensible to most Indians. However, for the time being, Bodh Gayā escaped the destruction that befell so many other places and although dark rumors were in the air, life continued as before. The last we hear of the community of Sri Lankan monks who looked after the Mahābodhi Temple is an inscription from around this time, the year 1262 CE. It reads: 'Om! Hail! Majestic is the shade of the Bodhi Tree, ancient, bestower of great enlightenment to the Victors and which is the stay of those who are on the road to perfect enlightenment. This village of Katihala in Sataghatta, its lands, water, together with the plough tax is granted by charter to the Vajirāsana for the monastery in trust to Venerable Mangalasvāmin of Lanka, master of the Tipitaka, by the King, son of Buddhasena, for as long as the sun and moon endure.' The inscription ends with a rather un-Buddhistic sentiment: 'Whichever king of my dynasty, good, bad or worthless, violates this grant, may his father be an ass and his mother a sow.'

There is no record of exactly how or when Bodh Gayā was destroyed, but when Dharmasvāmin visited, he was told of a raid that had taken place some time before his arrival. A female devotee had offered a beautiful emerald that had been made into eyes for the Buddha statue in the temple. 'It is told that the precious stone which had been inserted between the eyebrows of the statue emitted such light that formerly one was able to read at dusk. A Turuskha (Turkish) soldier, having placed a ladder, climbed up and pulled the stones out. They say that while coming down the ladder the soldier fell and the two eyes (of the statue) were broken into bits. The stones' brilliance, by which one could read, then grew dim.' When Dharmasvāmin arrived at Bodh Gayā in July 1234 CE, another attack was expected at any time and the few monks who had not yet fled were making preparations to protect the Buddha statue

in the temple from the fury of the iconoclasts. 'At the time Dharmasvāmin visited Vajrāsana the place was deserted and only four monks were found staying there. One of them said: "It is not good! All have fled from fear of the Turuskha soldiery." They blocked up the door in front of the Mahābodhi image with bricks and plastered it. Near it they placed another image as a substitute. They also plastered the outside door of the temple. On its surface they drew the image of Maheshvara in order to protect it from non-Buddhists. The monks said: "We five do not dare to remain here and shall have to flee." As the day was nearly past and the heat great, related Dharmasvāmin, they felt tired, and as it became dark, they remained there and fell asleep. Had the Turuskhas come they would not have known it. At daybreak they fled towards the north following a cart rut, and for seventeen days Dharmasvāmin did not see the face of the image (in the temple). At that time a woman appeared who brought the welcome news that the Turuskha soldiery had gone far away. Then Dharmasvāmin returned to Vajrāsana and stayed there worshipping and circumambulating the image of Mahābodhi.'

After this, the Mahābodhi Temple fell into ruin, perhaps due to deliberate destruction, perhaps due to neglect, probably due to a combination of both and evidence of pilgrims visiting becomes less and less. The temple itself became just one of many neglected ruins, the significance of which local people had forgotten. As the names of many cities and towns were changed after the Islamic invasion, simply finding where Bodh Gayā was would have been quite a task for a lone pilgrim coming from afar. But despite this, Bodh Gayā was never completely forgotten, especially by the Buddhists of Burma. The Sinhalese had maintained the Mahābodhi Temple for 900 years during the time it functioned as a center of Buddhism. The Burmese attempted to take over this role after the temple was deserted. Coming several times between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries to repair the temple the Burmese saved it from falling into utter ruins. After the mission of King Kyanzittha mentioned above, other missions from Burma came in 1472 and four times between 1811, 1857 and 1877. This means that for about 600 years the continued existence of the Mahābodhi Temple was almost entirely due to the devotion and generosity of the Buddhists of Burma.

Inscriptions found at Bodh Gayā dating from the 14^{th} century show that despite the virtual destruction of Buddhism in India, small pockets of Buddhists in scattered parts of the subcontinent still clung to their religion. Between 1302 and 1331, several parties of pilgrims from the Sindh came to Bodh Gayā and left reminders of their visits on the granite paving stones inside the temple. Sometime during the 15^{th} or 16^{th} centuries, a lonely pilgrim from what is believed to be Multan scratched a record of his visit on the old stone railing. So it seems that even amongst the overgrown and crumbling ruins, a few lone pilgrims could sometimes still be found paying their respects at this most sacred place.

The last Indian Buddhist we know of to have visited Bodh Gayā, and very possibly one of the last monks in India, was Buddhagupta. Born in South India in the second half of the 15th century, this indefatigable monk had already visited Afghanistan, Kashmir, Ladakh, Sri Lanka, Java, the Laccadives and even East Africa before he made his pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā. He seems to have spent some time at the deserted temple, meditating and performing pūjās before setting off again on his travels. Next he visited Assam, Tibet (where the young Tāranātha became his disciple), Burma and Lumphun in northern Thailand, and then finally he disappeared from history, leaving us to wonder where this great traveler ended up.

Around the middle of the 16th century a Nepalese pilgrim named Abhayaraj arrived in Bodh Gayā where he resided for several years. During his stay he made a careful plan of the Mahābodhi Temple and on his return used it to build a smaller replica of the original at Patan near Kathmandu. A little before 1773, the Panchen Lama sent nine monks and three laymen led by Tung Rampa to Sārnāth and Bodh Gayā. The Maharaja of Vārānasi welcomed the Tibetans, gave them letters of introduction for their onward journey, palanquins and attendants and they were able to reach Bodh Gayā in a fortnight. When the party, minus three monks who had succumbed to the Indian heat, returned to Tibet, the Maharaja sent an envoy with them to present gifts to the Panchen Lama. Among these presents were a watch, elephant tusks and a small model of the Mahābodhi Temple. After that, the next time we hear of Buddhists coming to Bodh Gayā is in 1811, when a mission sent by King Bodawpaya of Burma carried out repairs to the temple. At about this same time, a Burmese monk also visited and as there was nowhere for him to stay, he was given accommodation in the Mahant's residence where he had the distinction of converting one of the Hindu monks to Buddhism.

Towards the end of the 19th century, when Anagārika Dharmapāla claimed the Mahābodhi Temple for Buddhists, the Mahant insisted it belonged to him. However, all accounts of the temple prior to J.D. Beglar's restoration in 1880 indicate that it was an uncared for and neglected ruin. The second floor chamber and the first ground floor chamber had completely collapsed, the pinnacle was broken, and accumulated rubbish meant that the ground level around the temple came up to the niches on the outer walls. Visitors actually had to descend into the main shrine and every rainy season it was filled with stagnant water.

In 1877, Mindon Min, the last great Burmese king, sent yet another mission to Bodh Gayā, not merely to repair the temple but to build a monastery, provide accommodation for pilgrims, and employ workers to maintain the temple, in other words, to bring it once again to life. However, while the faith and determination of the king and the members of his mission may have been strong, their understanding of the importance of preserving the original character of the temple was not,

and inadvertently, they did a great deal of damage. The temple was now widely recognized to be of enormous historical and architectural significance, and this prompted the British authorities to ask Alexander Cunningham and Rajendralal Mitra to advise the Burmese mission on the work they were undertaking. When the Anglo-Burmese war broke out and the Burmese mission had to leave, the British finally decided to finish the work themselves.

The repair of the temple, the cleaning up of the sacred precincts, and partial excavations were ably carried out by J.D. Beglar in close consultation with Cunningham, and all of the expenses, 1000 Rupees all told, were met by the Government of India. Sadly, some of the choicest Buddha statues, stupas and other antiquities were shipped off to museums. While clearing the mountains of rubbish in the sacred precincts, a miniature model of the temple was found and Beglar used this to justify adding the four corner pinnacles and the facade of the upstairs shrine for which he was later much criticized. However, although these additions in their present form may not correspond to exactly how the temple originally looked, few can doubt that Beglar's restoration gave the temple back its majesty. Beglar understood that the Mahābodhi Temple was never meant to be a dead relic for students of archaeology and architecture to study, but a celebration in brick and stone of the Buddha's enlightenment and a proper temple where Buddhists could come and worship.

Now that the physical structure of the temple was restored, the task of restoring the rights of Buddhists to worship there and control it began. Anagārika Dharmapāla and the Mahant had been for years embroiled in a series of legal battles over its ownership. Finally, in 1906, the trial ended in defeat for Dharmapāla, a conclusion which, though a bitter blow, only served to strengthen his resolve. During the remaining twenty seven years of his life, he ceaselessly agitated for his cause, having the issue brought before the Indian National Congress on three occasions petitioning the government and mobilizing public opinion. In India public opinion gradually moved in favor of Buddhist control and eminent intellectuals and scholars began to speak out on the issue. Rabindranath Tagore, the only non-European until then ever to have won the Nobel Prize, put his support squarely behind Dharmapāla: 'I am sure it will be admitted by all Hindus who are true to their own ideals that it is an intolerable wrong to allow the temple, raised on the spot where Lord Buddha attained His enlightenment, to remain under the control of a rival sect which can neither have an intimate knowledge of nor sympathy for the Buddhist religion and its rites of worship. I consider it to be a sacred duty of all individuals believing in freedom and justice to help to restore this historical site to the community of people who still reverently carry on that particular current of history in their own living faith.' Even Mahatma Gandhi, the most orthodox of Hindus, had to admit that

the temple rightfully belonged to the Buddhists: 'There is no doubt that the possession of the Temple should vest in the Buddhists. There may be legal difficulties. They must be overcome. If the report is true [it was] that animal sacrifice is offered in the Temple, it is a sacrilege. It is equally a sacrilege if the worship is offered, as it is alleged, in a way calculated to wound the susceptibilities of the Buddhist.' Finally, in 1949 the Bodh Gayā Temple Act (*Bihar Act* XVII 1949, amended 8th February 1955) was passed, making provision for the setting up of a committee of four Hindus and four Buddhists to manage the affairs of the temple. This arrangement was far from satisfactory, but was better than what had prevailed previously.

Today, Bodh Gayā is a small but lively village that has grown up around the Mahābodhi Temple. In any week, an ambassador from a Buddhist country, a famous Buddhist scholar or meditation teacher will turn up. During the winter, at the height of the pilgrim season, one will see Indian Buddhists from Maharastra, Ladakh, Bengal or the tribal areas of Meghalaya or Manipur. One may see Vietnamese or Nepalese, Japanese or Sinhalese, Thais or Malaysians. One will certainly see Tibetan refugees who have lived in India since 1959 and even a few whom the Chinese authorities have allowed to come on pilgrimage on condition that some members of the family stay behind to guarantee their return. There will be Europeans, Americans and Australians, some who come out of curiosity, others out of devotion. This great variety of peoples from different cultures adds a fascinating dimension to Bodh Gayā's historical, artistic and spiritual significance, and makes it one of the most interesting destinations in India.

What to See

Mindon Min's Bell

The pilgrim enters the temple compound by the east gate and sees the spires of the temple rising up before him or her and the sacred precincts spread out below. When the famous English novelist E.M. Forster came here, he said: 'The view when one drives up and sees everything suddenly from the edge of the embankment is, as the books say, not easily forgotten. There can't be anything like it in the world.' Descending the stairs and proceeding towards the temple, the pilgrim will see on the left a large bronze bell. The inscription on this bell says that it was especially cast by King Mindon Min of Burma and taken to Bodh Gayā by the mission he sent there in 1877.

The Gateway

Proceeding a little further, the pilgrim will pass under a beautifully carved gateway marking the entrance into the sacred precinct. To judge by the style of the carvings on it, this gateway must date from about the 5th

century CE. On the west side of the left pillar is an image of Jambala sitting under a wishing tree with a prosperity vase on one side and his consort on the other side. In his left hand he holds a bag of gold coins and in his right a lemon. On the south side of the same pillar are two deer flanking a Dhamma wheel. When Dharmasvāmin visited Bodh Gayā, this gateway was already broken and he tells us that it had been erected by one Acharya Hayaghosa. At the base of the gateway are two kneeling figures of Burmese workmanship, probably placed here during the Burmese mission's visit in the 11th century.

Buddhapada Temple

Just beyond the gateway and to the left, is a small temple with a portico, the pillars of which are delicately carved. Under the portico is a large round stone carved with footprints of the type used in early centuries as a symbol of the Buddha. It was a stone like this that Dharmasvāmin saw during his visit and about which he made some interesting comments: 'Formerly it was intended to build a chapel over the footprints but learned Pundits were of the opinion that if a chapel were built, it would require a door and a caretaker who would ask remuneration from worshippers and the number of devotees worshipping the footprints would become less, and thus the chapel was not built.' A short inscription on the side of this stone is dated 1308 CE, although the stone itself was carved many centuries earlier.

Panchapandu Temples

Beside the Buddhapada Temple is a row of Hindu shrines built during the time when Bodh Gayā was neglected by Buddhists and used by Hindus. The first shrine contains an interesting collection of Buddha statues dating from the Pāla period now dressed up and painted to look like Hindu gods. There is also a fine statue of Tārā. The presiding brahmins will badger the pilgrim for donations, a few rupees is sufficient. Here as elsewhere at Bodh Gayā worshippers are under no obligation to make a donation.

The Mahābodhi Temple

The pilgrim now stands in front of the great Mahābodhi Temple, the most sacred and in many respects one of the most beautiful temples in the Buddhist world. The temple consists of a rectangular base with a chamber (*garbha*), a large inward sloping spire (*sikhāra*) rising from its center and four smaller spires at the corners. Though a part of the original temple, these smaller spires were removed in the late medieval period and added again during Beglar's restoration. The central spire is about 52 meters high and is crowned by an *amalaka*, a flattened round form common to most Indian temples.

Except for the four pillars on the portico, the door frames, steps and

floor, the whole temple is made out of brick. The bricks in the oldest part of the temple measure 48 x 33 x 5 centimeters, and are so well made and fit together so closely that almost no cement had to be used to hold them together. The obvious care taken in building the temple and molding the bricks is undoubtedly one of the reasons it has survived the numerous earthquakes that have rocked the region over the centuries. In Huien Tsiang's time, the two niches on either side of the main entrance held statues of Avalokitesvara and Maitreya made of silver, but now hold Buddha statues placed there during the temple's restoration. The Buddha on the left has two smaller Buddhas at its shoulders, while the bodhisattvas Padmapāni and Avalokitesvara stand at its side. The Buddha in the niche on the right is particularly beautiful: stylistically it represents the transition from the Gupta to the Pāla style and dates from the 7th century CE. Both Buddhas stand serenely on lotuses that rise above the jagged rocks and swirling waves of samsāra. On entering the portico, two more Buddha statues will be seen on both the left and right.

Once inside the first chamber, the pilgrim will notice that some of the large granite slabs on the floor have crudely executed carvings of crouching male and female figures with hands in the anjali gesture, some holding lotus buds and worshipping stupas. There are also several inscriptions. All of these record pilgrimages made to Bodh Gayā by groups of princes and chiefs from Sindh together with their wives between 1302 and 1331.

Leaving the chamber, the pilgrim now enters a large barrel-vaulted room, at the end of which is the main shrine. This shrine is built on the very place where the Buddha attained enlightenment, the place variously called 'the Diamond Throne,' 'the Victory Throne of all Buddhas' or 'the Navel of the Earth.'[5] It was while seated here that 'vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, understanding arose, light arose' in the Buddha that full moon night in 527 BCE, and where he continued to sit for seven days 'experiencing the joy of liberation.' The shrine on which the Buddha statue sits dates from the early Pāla period. When Cunningham removed the stone slabs of this shrine, he found to his surprise, an earlier smaller one inside. This second shrine had a plaster facing which when analyzed was found to be made up of lime mixed with tiny grains of coral, sapphire, crystal, pearl and ivory. A ball of clay was also found which, when broken, yielded a large number of gold objects–flowers, disks and beads; precious and semi-precious stones; and an impression in thin gold of a coin dating from about 160 CE, indicating that this second shrine may have been erected around that time. Further investigation revealed a third shrine with what is thought to be the original Vajirāsana on it. Consisting of a broken, highly polished, plain sandstone slab resting on a pedestal with four pilasters on its front, this Vajirāsana closely resembled the Vajirāsana represented in the Bhārhut relief. There is little doubt this Vajirāsana is a part of the original temple











Bodh Gayā









built by King Asoka in the 2^{rd} century BCE though the polished sandstone slab may well be earlier still. The erecting of new shrines without the demolition of earlier ones and the treasures found therein is evidence of the enormous reverence with which this sacred spot has been held over the centuries.

The statue originally placed on the Vajirāsana was called the Mahābodhi Image and was the most famous statue in the ancient world. In Huien Tsiang's time, this chamber was so dark, probably due to a wooden pavilion at the entrance, that the features of the Mahābodhi Image could only be seen by reflecting light inside with the use of a great mirror. He also tells of an interesting incident that occurred some time before his visit: 'King Sasanka, having cut down the Bodhi Tree, wished to destroy this image; but having seen its loving features, his mind had no rest or determination, and he returned with his retinue homeward. On the way, he said to one of his officers: "We must remove this statue of Buddha and place there a figure of Maheshvara." The officer, having received the order, was moved with fear, and sighing, said: "If I destroy the figure of Buddha, then during successive kalpas I will reap misfortune; if I disobey the king, he will put me to a cruel death and destroy my family; in either case, whether I obey or disobey, such will be the consequences; what, then, shall I do?" At this point, he called to his presence a man with a believing heart (a Buddhist) to help him, and set him to build across the chamber and in front of the statue a wall. The man, from a feeling of shame at the darkness, placed a burning lamp (in with the statue) then drew a figure of Maheshvara on the wall. The work being finished, he reported the matter. On hearing it, the king was seized with terror; his body produced sores and his flesh rotted off, and after a short while he died. Then the officer quickly ordered the intervening wall to be pulled down, and when this was done the lamp was found to be still burning even though several days had elapsed.'

During Dharmasvāmin's time, the statue was apparently easier to see: 'The face of the Mahābodhi image in the temple is two cubits in height. One is never satiated beholding such an image and has no desire to go and behold another.' Dharmasvāmin also said that 'even people with little faith, when standing in front of the image, felt it impossible not to shed tears.' However, the Mahābodhi Image was destroyed long ago, probably during the Islamic invasion. The statue we see today was found in the Mahant's residence and moved to its present position by Joseph Beglar at the request of General Cunningham. Dating from the late 10^{th} century, this statue is more than 2 meters high and shows the Buddha in the earth-touching gesture and it sits on a patterned cushion instead of the usual lotus. The pedestal below shows Pathavī, the Earth Goddess, flanked by two elephants and two lions. Although this Buddha statue is not particularly impressive, the environment in which it is observed gives it a definite appeal. When Rabindranath Tagore saw it, it is said that it was

the only time in his life when he felt the urge to bow before an image.

Returning to the first chamber, the pilgrim should climb the stairwell on the proper left leading up to the terrace. At the top of the stairwell is a large standing crowned Buddha flanked by two smaller Buddhas, the one on the right subduing the elephant Nālagiri. On either side of the main figure are beautifully carved leogryphs mounted on elephants. Stepping out onto the upper terrace, the pilgrim will notice to the right a door leading to a chamber directly above the main entrance of the temple. This upper chamber is only open in the evenings. Inside is a beautiful standing Buddha from the Pāla period. Smaller Buddhas, two standing and two sitting, can be seen on either side of the crowned and bejeweled main figure, while two devotees bow at its feet. The two figures on the pedestal are Pathavī, the earth goddess and Kāma, the Hindu god of erotic love. Like Cupid, his counterpart in Greek mythology, Kāma uses a bow and arrows to smite his victims. Here, Kāma sits dejected, his bow and arrow abandoned beside him, having been defeated by the Buddha's teaching of calm detachment. The statue has recently been gilded, adding considerably to its beauty.

Leaving the upper chamber and proceeding around the terrace keeping the temple's main spire to one's right, the pilgrim can walk around the temple, passing the two smaller pinnacles at the back of the temple and passing above the Bodhi Tree. Each of these pinnacles has a Pāla period Buddha statue in them. On the right side of the statue in the north-western pinnacle is a small figure of a monk holding a begging bowl and a staff. Such staffs were used by monks while traveling or on pilgrimage. The iron ring on the top made a jingling sound that gave the staff its name, *khakharaka*. Arriving at the north-east corner of the temple, the pilgrim should enter the stairwell and descend once again to the ground floor. At the top of this stairwell is a large standing Buddha statue of some interest. This attractive statue has its hands in the gesture of bestowing blessings and is flanked by Avalokitesvara on the left and Maitreya on the right. The statue has several inscriptions on it. The one on the bottom right, which indicates that it was donated by a monk from what is now Bangladesh, reads: 'The gift of the senior monk, Viryendra, well versed in the Vinaya and a resident of the great monastery of Somapura, an inhabitant of Samatata country (Bengal) and a follower of the excellent Mahayana school.' The small figure beside the inscription is probably a portrait of Viryendra.

Going out through the main entrance and turning right, the pilgrim can walk around the outside of the temple. The outer walls have niches in them containing statues of the Buddha and various bodhisattvas, some of them ancient, others recent. Below each niche is a panel showing pairs of birds either holding a string of pearls in their beaks or with their heads turned away from each other. The pillars separating each panel have either floral designs or makharas, once again with strings of pearls in their

mouths. Huien Tsiang mentions seeing all this stucco work, though it has been very much repaired since that time. He also says that at that time all the Buddha statues in the niches were gilded.

The Bodhi Tree

At the back of the Mahābodhi Temple is the Bodhi Tree. On the night the Buddha attained enlightenment, he sheltered under the branches of such a tree. This variety of fig is called *Ficus religiosa* by botanists. In Pali it is called *bodhi-rukkha* or *assattha*, in Sanskrit *ashvattha*, and in Hindi *peepal*. The present Bodhi Tree was planted in the 19th century, several previous trees having died or been destroyed. Legend says that before Asoka became a Buddhist he had the Bodhi Tree cut down but it miraculously sprouted again. The legend also says that after his conversion, Asoka became so devoted to the tree that his queen Tishyarakshitā got jealous and had it killed, after which it again miraculously regrew. There is some historical basis for the story that King Asoka's daughter, Sanghamittā, took a branch from the Bodhi Tree to Sri Lanka. The tree that grew from that branch is believed to still grow in the ancient Sri Lankan capital at Anuradhapura. History also tells us that King Sasanka destroyed the Bodhi Tree during the time he persecuted Buddhists around 600 CE.

Huien Tsiang says that every Vesākha—the full moon of May when the Buddha's enlightenment was celebrated—thousands of people from all over India would gather at Bodh Gaya and bathe the roots of the tree with scented water and perfumed milk, play music and scatter heaps of flowers. Dharmasvāmin noticed similar expressions of devotion: 'The tree stands inside a fort-like structure surrounded on the south, west and north by a brick wall; it has pointed leaves of bright green color. Having opened a door, one sees a large trench the shape of a basin ... The devotees worship the tree with curd, milk and perfumes such as sandalwood, camphor, and so on. They bring offerings from afar and keep it constantly moist.'

The Bodhi Tree originally grew directly behind the Vajirāsana, a little further to the east of its present position, but was replanted in its present position when the Mahābodhi Temple was built. The present Bodhi Tree is probably a distant descendent of the original one. Writing in 1892, Cunningham said: 'In December 1862 I found this tree very much decayed; one large stem to the westward, with three branches, was still green, but the other branches were barkless and rotten. I next saw the tree in 1871, and again in 1875, when it had become completely decayed, and shortly afterwards in 1876, the only remaining portion of the tree fell over the west wall during a storm, and the Old Pipal Tree was gone. Many seeds, however, had been collected, and young scions of the present tree were already in existence to take its place.' In 1880, Cunningham dug near the new tree and at a depth of about a meter, he found two pieces of very old wood which he believed were the remains of the Bodhi Tree destroyed by King Sasanka.

Incorporated into the new railing that surrounds the Bodhi Tree is a part of the ancient enclosure. It consists of a carved stone frame and below it a long stone with carvings of elephants, lions, horses, a figure with a sword at one end and a devotee offering a bowl at the other. The carvings are badly worn and may date from the late Gupta period.

The Outer Vajirāsana

At the foot of the Bodhi Tree is the oldest object that can still be viewed at Bodh Gayā—a large rectangular slab of stone. This stone may have originally been placed over the Vajirāsana inside the temple. This outer Vajirāsana is 143 x 238 x 13.5 centimeters and made from polished Chunar sandstone. The top is decorated with unusual geometrical designs and there is a palmette and goose frieze around the edge. Because of its migratory habits, the wild goose (*hamsa*) was used in ancient Buddhism as a symbol of detachment. The Vajirāsana was probably made by King Asoka, and the fact that a similar palmette and goose design is to be found on his pillar capital at Sāñchī strengthens this conjecture.

Ratanacankama Cetiya

Leaving the Bodhi Tree and continuing around the temple, the pilgrim comes to Ratanacankama Cetiya, the Jewel Promenade Shrine.[6] This structure marks the place where the Buddha walked up and down in the 3rd week after his enlightenment, and along with the Vajirāsana, the Bodhi Tree and the railing, formed a part of the earliest temple at Bodh Gayā. The Ratanacankama Cetiya originally consisted of a long brick plinth with a row of 11 pillars on either side supporting a roof above the plinth. Today the plinth has been encased in stone, and only the base of one row of pillars can be seen, the other row being buried under the north wall of the Mahābodhi Temple. One of the original pillars has also survived and can still be seen in the Archaeological Museum. The shaft of the pillar is octagonal and has a graceful female figure carved on it. Letters carved on the pillar bases, probably mason's marks, indicate that they date from about 100 BCE.

The Railing

The pilgrim will have noticed that the Mahābodhi Temple is surrounded by a railing. The first railing would have been made of wood and would have enclosed an area much smaller than the present railing. In about 100 BCE, a stone railing replaced the original one. Parts of this old stone railing still survive and the inscriptions on it indicate that it was the gift of a group of women with royal connections. This old railing formed a quadrangle, a little smaller than the area occupied by the present Mahābodhi Temple, and indeed, Cunningham found the remains of the plinth that the railing originally stood on under the foundations of the temple. Sometime in about the 6th century CE, this old stone railing was



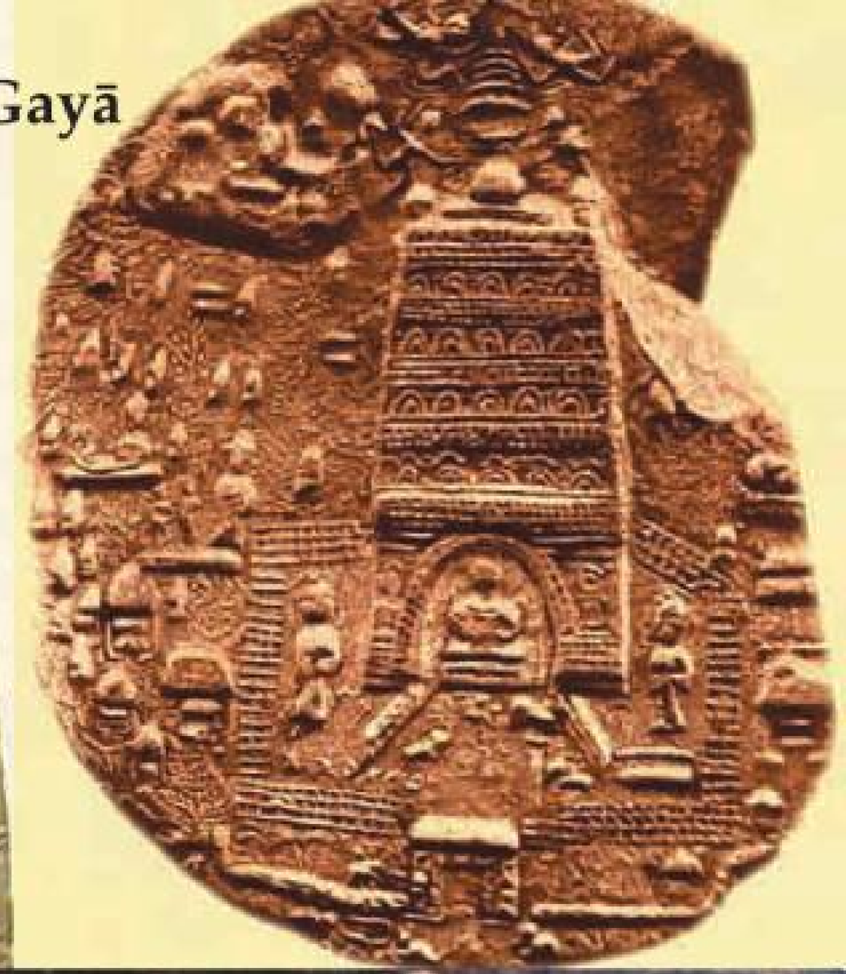

Bodh Gayā



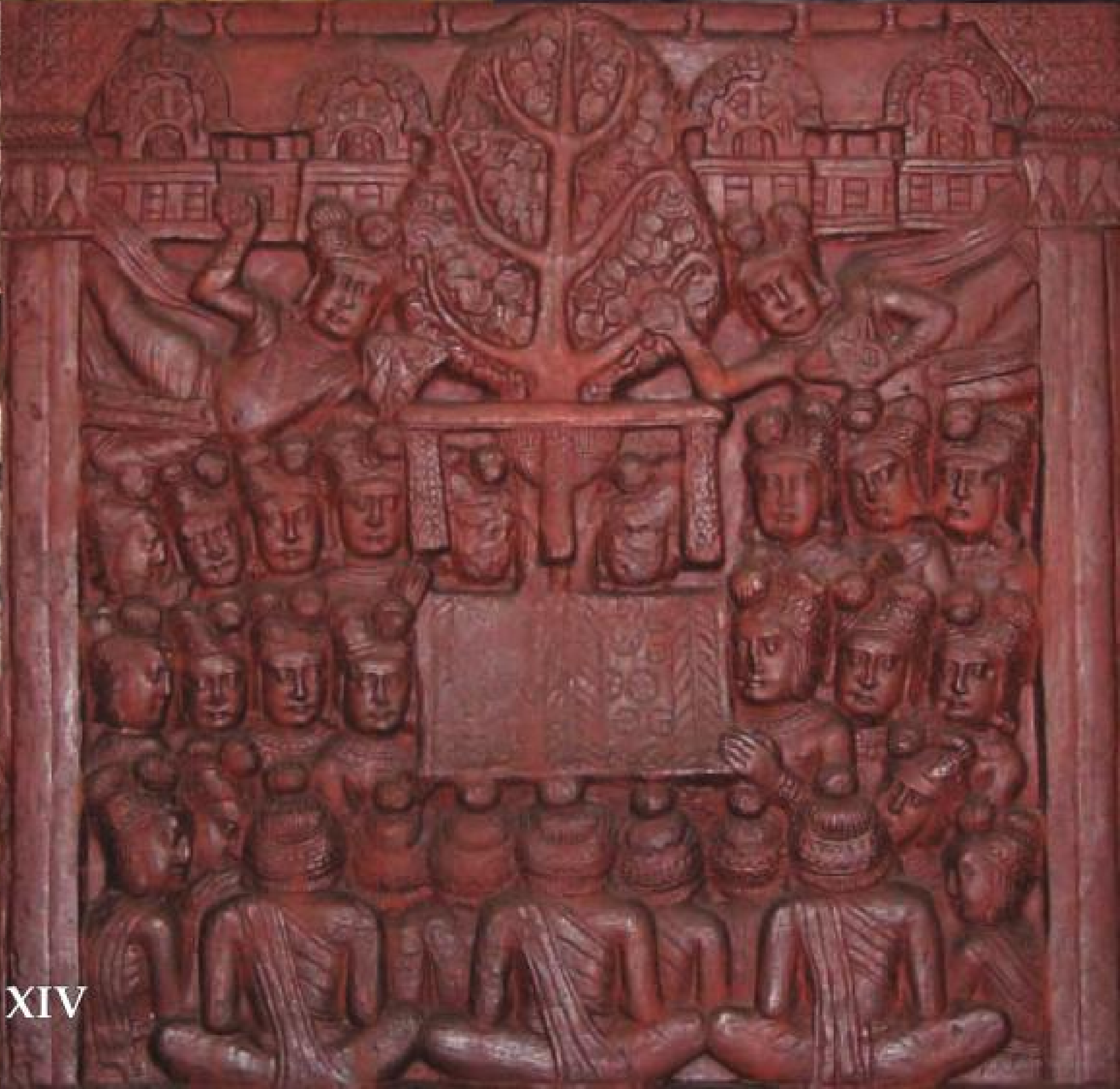








Bodh Gayā



dismantled, new stones were added and it was rebuilt to enclose an area almost twice as large as before. The difference between the old and new railing is clear from the stone used; the earlier is made of a smooth brown sandstone, while the latter is made of a gray, rather coarse granite. Today only seven railing pillars are still in their original position, the rest having been removed to the Archaeological Museum and replaced by rather crude cement casts of the originals.

The remaining pillars are Nos. 4, 7 and 9 from the south-west corner on the west side; Nos. 12 and 14 from the south-west corner on the south side; and the two gate pillars on the north side. Two of these pillars (No. 4, west side, and No. 12, south side) have interesting carvings on them. The first shows a man controlling an elephant, perhaps an illustration of *Dhammapada* v. 326:

> Formerly this mind wandered as it liked,
> Where it wished and according to its pleasure.
> But now I will master it with wisdom,
> As a mahout controls an elephant with a hook.

The second has what is believed to be a representation of the apsidal temple at Sārnāth on its outer side. We will discuss the other carvings on the railing in the section on the Archaeological Museum. By the 19th century, much of the railing had disappeared, and what survived either lay buried under rubbish or was incorporated into the walls of the Hindu temples to the left of the main entrance of the Mahābodhi Temple.

Votive Stupas

Outside the railing, the pilgrim will notice hundreds of votive stupas in and around the gardens. The undecorated stupas with the hemispherical domes are earlier than the elaborately carved stupas with the flat-topped domes which date from the Pāla period. Some of the more beautifully carved of these later stupas can be seen along the inside of the eastern side of the railing. In the 19th century there were also hundreds of thousands of small clay stupas and votive tablets found around the temple, but they have all now disappeared. Several of these plaques have been found at Pagan and Pegu in Burma, and Major R.C. Temple, commenting on these discoveries, says 'there was a factory for such objects at Bodh Gayā for the pilgrims, who took them hence all over the Buddhist world of the time as keepsakes and relics, and presented them to their own places of worship on their return home.' Directly south of the Mahābodhi Temple are the foundations of the biggest stupa ever built at Bodh Gayā. According to Huien Tsiang, this stupa was originally 60 meters high and was built by King Asoka.

Ratanaghara Cetiya

In the north-west corner of the gardens round the temple is the Ratanaghara Cetiya, the Jewel House Shrine, of which only the walls survive. The original shrine here was said to have been built for the Buddha by the devas, and the Buddha spent the fourth week after his enlightenment here contemplating the Abhidhamma.[7] The original stone door frame, with elaborate though much worn carvings on it is still intact and dates from the 9^{th} century. Inside are fragments of ancient statues.

Animisa Cetiya

To the right of the path leading to the main entrance of the temple and on the top of the embankment, is a temple with a single spire, similar to that on the Mahābodhi Temple. Inside the temple is a particularly beautiful statue of Avalokitesvara Sīhanāda holding a lotus in his left hand and with a lion at his right side. The statue dates from the Pāla period but is in a style distinctly different from most statues from this time. Perhaps it was made in another part of India and was carried to Bodh Gayā by a pilgrim.

This temple is usually known as the Animisa Cetiya, The "Unblinking Shrine", and is said to mark the place where the Buddha sat for seven days staring without blinking at the Bodhi Tree out of gratitude for the shelter it had given him.[8] However, this identification is almost certainly wrong as this temple sits on the top of the mound indicating its late date and it is facing away from rather than towards the Bodhi Tree. A Jātaka story says that the Animisa Cetiya was directly north of the Vajirāsana. This is confirmed by Huien Tsiang who said it was 'on the left side of the road, to the north of the place where the Buddha walked,' that is, north of the Ratanacankama Shrine. If this is so, the Animisa Shrine must be represented by the foundations of the large structure a little beyond the gate on the northern side of the railing and on which Tibetan monks often do prostrations. It will be noticed that a statue placed in this structure would have looked exactly at where the Bodhi Tree originally stood, just a little behind the Vajirāsana inside the Mahābodhi Temple.

At the north-west corner of the Animisa Cetiya is a line of statues, the middle one being of Avalokitesvara. This fine statue depicts the Bodhisattva of Compassion with four arms–the upper left and right ones holding a lotus and a *mala* respectively, the lower left one holding a water pot and the right one in the gesture of bestowing blessings.

Shrine and Buddha Statue

A short distance north-west of the Bodhi Tree is a small shrine now with only its lower walls still intact. Inside this shrine is a superb example of Pāla period sculpture. The statue, over a meter high and dating from

9th century, depicts the Buddha in the earth-touching gesture. Above him is an umbrella and the spreading branches of the Bodhi Tree and to the left and right are jubilant devas offering garlands. Behind the Buddha is an elaborate halo and throne flanked on either side by images of Maitreya and Avalokitesvara. The benignly smiling Buddha sits on a lotus below which are several pedestals brought from elsewhere and cemented here. The pedestal in the center depicts the seven treasures or accoutrements of the Universal Statesman (*Cakkavatti*), the secular equivalent of a Buddha as mentioned in the Cakkavatti Sīhanāda Sutta. These treasures are, from the left, the horse, the jewel, the consort, the wheel, the minister, the citizen and the elephant.

South-East Shrine

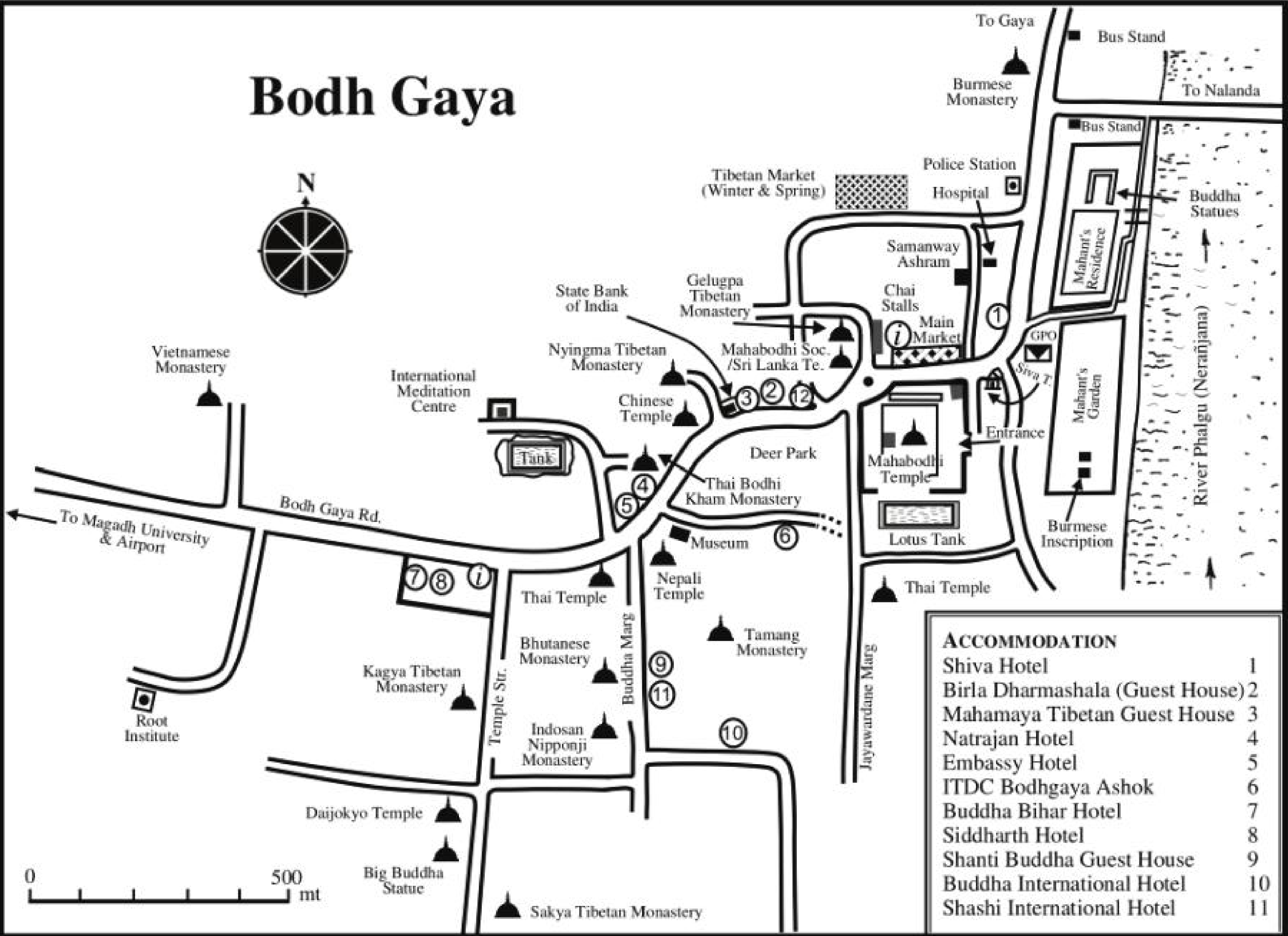
After his enlightenment, the Buddha had reservations about teaching the Dhamma, thinking that few would be able to understand his message. Then Brahma appeared before him urging him to change his mind: 'Let the Lord teach the Dhamma, let the Happy One teach the Dhamma. There are beings with but little dust in their eyes who, if they do not hear the Dhamma, will decline, while if they do they will grow.' The Buddha considered Brahma's pleas and decided that he would, after all, teach anyone who would listen and who could understand, proclaiming: 'Open are the doors of the Deathless. Let all who can hear respond with faith.'[9] Huien Tsiang saw a shrine built at the place where this incident took place and the remains of it now lie in the south-east corner of the sacred precincts around the temple. Only the foundations of this shrine remain and the large Buddha statue within dates from the Pāla period though its head is a recent restoration.

Pillar

Just beyond the south-east corner of the sacred precincts of the temple is a section of a huge pillar. The Bhārhut relief and the Kumarhur Plaque both indicate that one of Asoka's pillars crowned with an elephant capital originally stood just outside the temple railing to the right of its east gateway. However, neither Fa Hien nor Huien Tsiang mention seeing the pillar which suggests that it must have been either destroyed or moved to another location by that time. The pillar that the pilgrim now sees, was found next to the stupa across the river from Bodh Gayā. It was moved to Gol Patthar in Gayā at the beginning of the 19th century and then moved to its present location in 1956. It may be a segment of the pillar originally erected by King Asoka at Bodh Gayā but this is not certain.

Tank

Walking through the pavilion just south of the pillar, the pilgrim will see a large tank which at certain times of the year is filled with the blossoms of beautiful lotuses and water lilies. This tank was excavated


Bodh Gaya
N
To Gaya
Bus Stand
To Nalanda
Burmese Monastery
Bus Stand
Police Station
Hospital
Tibetan Market (Winter & Spring)
Buddha Statues
Mahant's Residence
Samanway Ashram
Chai Stalls
Main Market
State Bank of India
Gelugpa Tibetan Monastery
Mahabodhi Soc. /Sri Lanka Te.
GPO
Siva T.
Mahant's Garden
River Phalgu (Nerañjana)
Vietnamese Monastery
Nyingma Tibetan Monastery
International Meditation Centre
Chinese Temple
Entrance
Tank
Deer Park
Mahabodhi Temple
Thai Bodhi Kham Monastery
Burmese Inscription
Bodh Gaya Rd.
To Magadh University & Airport
Museum
Lotus Tank
Nepali Temple
Thai Temple
Thai Temple
Bhutanese Monastery
Tamang Monastery
Kagya Tibetan Monastery
Buddha Marg
Jayawardane Marg
Temple Str.
Root Institute
Indosan Nipponji Monastery
Daijokyo Temple
Big Buddha Statue
0
500 mt
Sakya Tibetan Monastery
ACCOMMODATION
Shiva Hotel 1
Birla Dharmashala (Guest House) 2
Mahamaya Tibetan Guest House 3
Natrajan Hotel 4
Embassy Hotel 5
ITDC Bodhgaya Ashok 6
Buddha Bihar Hotel 7
Siddharth Hotel 8
Shanti Buddha Guest House 9
Buddha International Hotel 10
Shashi International Hotel 11

in the process of making bricks for the Mahābodhi Temple and other buildings and later doubled as a place for bathing. Even at the end of the 19th century there were crocodiles in the tank This tank is often mistaken for the Mucalinda Tank, a misunderstanding not helped by the sign nearby or the recent erection of a statue of the Buddha sheltered by Mucalinda in the middle of the tank. The real Mucalinda Tank is actually a shallow muddy pool about one and a half kilometer further south, in the village of Muchalin.[10]

Archaeological Museum

Because many of the sculptures from Bodh Gayā were either taken to museums during the 19th century or simply disappeared, the Archaeological Museum has only a small collection. The most important exhibit is the stone railing that once surrounded the Mahābodhi Temple, most of it reassembled in the museum's courtyard, with a smaller section inside. The meaning of the carvings on the railing has given rise to much speculation. Benimadhab Barua has suggested, in most cases rather unconvincingly, that many of the carvings represent zodiacal signs. In fact, the carvings seem to be illustrations of famous Buddhist shrines, events in the life of the Buddha, scenes from daily life, auspicious symbols, and in some cases, representations of popular Hindu deities and zodiacal signs, composed in no particular order.

Some of the more clearly recognizable carvings on the railing in the courtyard include: (1) an ascetic in a cave; (2) a winged deer; (3) an ascetic in a hut with a lion; (4) a man with a horse-headed female; (5) two men playing chess on a board with 64 squares; (6) a woman and child listening to a goat or deer, perhaps illustrating the Rohanatamiga Jātaka; (7) a winged elephant; (8) a mermaid. Along the coping stone is a line of mermaids putting their hands in the mouths of sea monsters, a procession of mythological beasts and floral designs. The carvings on the railing inside the museum include: (1) two figures worshipping at the Indasāla Cave; (2) loving couples; (3) a Bodhi Tree surrounded by a railing; (4) a centaur, perhaps Dhanu, the Indian Sagittarius; (5) three elephants worshipping the Bodhi Tree; (6) men in a boat picking lotuses, perhaps illustrating *Suttanipāta* v.2; (7) the Hindu goddess Gaja Lakshmi; (8) a temple enshrining a Dhamma Wheel; (9) the purchase of the Jetavana by Anāthapindika; (10) a winged horse; (11) a man with wings riding on a sea monster; (12) a warrior carrying a sword and shield. On most of the crossbars are lotus medallions, sometimes with human heads, sometimes with animals in their centers.

The museum is open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and closed on Fridays.

Modern Temples and Monasteries

Many Buddhist countries and sects of Buddhism have built temples at Bodh Gayā, often in their particular traditional styles, giving this small

Indian town an unusual international flavor. The oldest of these buildings is the Mahabodhi Resthouse built by Anagārika Dharmapāla at the turn of the 20th century. Right next to it is a Tibetan temple of the Gelugpa sect. The walls of this temple are painted in Tibetan style with scenes from the Buddha's life and pictures of the great pundits of the Indian Mahayana and the Tibetan Vajrayana schools. On the shrine is a beautiful statue of Maitreya. Down the road is the fine new temple of the Nyingapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the Chinese temple and beyond it, the temple of Darjeeling's Buddhist community. A little beyond this is Wat Bodh Gayā, built by the King of Thailand in the 1950s. Turning the corner and proceeding further, the pilgrim will come to the brightly painted Bhutanese temple. Across the road and down a little is a temple of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism Beyond this are two Japanese temples and at the end of the road is a 24 meter high statue of the Buddha carved out of sandstone. On the other side of town beside the old road to Gayā, just beyond the Mahant's residence, is the Burmese monastery with its recently rebuilt temple.

The Mahant's residence

This large walled compound, running for some distance along the bank of the river, is the residence or palace of the Mahant. Although supposedly the home of a religious ascetic, the place has the atmosphere of a barn yard with geese, chickens and cows wandering about and tractors coming and going. The monastery was built gradually during the period when there were no Buddhists at Bodh Gayā, and as the builders have incorporated many Buddhist sculptures into the structure, it is of some interest to the Buddhist. In niches on either side of the main gate leading into the compound are three small but beautifully carved Buddha statues; the one on the left has recently had its head broken off.

Entering the main gate, proceeding some distance and passing through the first gate on the right, the pilgrim will enter a large walled vegetable garden. At the far end of this garden are two Burmese-style pavilions. The first of these houses the inscription set up by the mission sent to repair the Mahābodhi Temple by King Mindon Min. Written in both Devanagari and Burmese scripts, the inscription is carved on a smooth creamy white marble slab. The second pavilion had a painting on its walls, possibly depicting the Burmese mission worshipping the temple, but sadly, this painting has recently been whitewashed over.

Retracing one's steps back through the gateway, the pilgrim should now enter the residence itself. In the courtyard is the Mahant's throne with its tiger skin, and just behind it, cemented into the walls, are several Buddhist sculptures. The most interesting of these is the one of Avalokitesvara Sīhanāda riding on a lion and holding a trident. The presiding brahmins will expect money—a few rupees is quite sufficient.









Mahant's Palace, Bodh Gayā

Mahant's Palace, Bodh Gayā











Leaving the residence by the main entrance and turning left, the pilgrim will see a group of spired temples built around a courtyard. This courtyard houses fourteen large Buddha statues, although the most interesting statue has recently been stolen. One of these Buddha images, the lightbrown standing one on the left, of which only the upper half survives, dates from the fifth century CE, and as such is the oldest Buddha statue still to be seen around Bodh Gaya. This statue has one hand raised in the gesture of imparting fearlessness and has an unusual elongated halo behind the head.

At the far end of the courtyard is a large stone with the Buddha's footprints on it, and several stupas. The pilgrim should now return to the main compound and leave by the east gate that leads to the river. In a sunken niche on the right of the gate is a statue of the Tantric deity Chundā, one of the most impressive images still to be seen around Bodh Gayā.

Mucalinda Tank

The Buddha spent a week at Bodh Gayā sitting at the foot of a mucalinda tree. While there, a great rainstorm began and the great nāga cobra Mucalinda curled itself around the Buddha seven times and opened its hood over him saying, 'Let not cold or heat, the touch of flies or mosquitoes, wind or heat or creeping things disturb the Lord.'[11] This tree disappeared centuries ago but the tank on whose banks it grew is still there.

To get there take the road that goes through Bodh Gayā's market and which runs parallel to the river and follow it south for about one and a half kilometers to the village of Muchalin. At one point the pilgrim will have to walk through cultivated fields—be careful not to tread down the crops. The Mucalinda tank is on the edge of the village and is filled with dark water and surrounded by palm trees and stands of bamboo. On the west side of the tank is a small Hindu temple enshrining several small stupas now being worshiped as Siva lingams. The Mucalinda Tank is worth seeing because of its association with the Buddha, but as it is in a completely rural setting it is also of interest to those who would like to see something of Indian village life.

Nerañjarā River

Perhaps the most attractive natural landmark around Bodh Gayā is the Nerañjarā River, now called Nilajan or sometimes Lilajan. Wide, sandy and shallow even in the rainy season, the river is a pleasant place to sit beside or walk along in the cool of the late afternoon. The Buddha bathed in the Nerañjarā several times during his stay at Bodh Gayā. An ancient Pali commentary says that the Nerañjarā derived its name from the words 'pleasant' (*nelam*) or alternatively 'blue' (*nīla*), and 'water' (*jalam*). It also describes the river as flowing with 'pure, blue and cool water,' a

description that still holds good even though parts of the river are used as a toilet by the local people. A few kilometers downstream from Bodh Gayā, the Nerañjarā meets the Mohana to form the Phalgu River which flows past Gayā and which is considered sacred by Hindus.

Stupa

Directly across the river from Bodh Gayā, and surrounded by a village, is a grassy mound, the remains of an ancient stupa. Huien Tsiang was told that this stupa was built to mark the location of events in one of the Buddha's former lives as told in the Matiposaka Jātaka.[12] Excavations done in the 1970's indicated that it was first built in the late Gupta period, repaired several times, and finally enlarged by the Pāla king Devapāladeva in the 9th century. This is confirmed by an inscription found during excavation that reads 'Sujātā's abode (as built by) King Devapala' and indicates that at that time the place was believed to be the site of Sujātā's house. According to legend, as the Buddha sat under the Bodhi Tree just before his enlightenment, the young woman Sujātā offered him a bowl of milk rice, which gave him the strength he needed for his final struggle. This stupa was relatively complete until the beginning of the 19th century, when an Englishman named Boddam removed huge amounts of bricks from it for a house he was building in Gayā. During the digging, a stone box was found which contained fragments of bone and numerous small images. Boddam also uncovered a large stone pillar which he had dragged to Gayā and erected.

Local people are claiming that several other locations beyond the stupa are the site of events in the Buddha's life. All these claims are spurious, of recent origin and made only in the hope of getting donations from pilgrims.

How to Get There

Bodh Gayā is 12 kilometers from Gayā, and is easily reached by bus or rickshaw. See the chapter on Gayā. A new international airport has just been opened at Gayā, so it is now possible to fly to Bodh Gayā directly from Bangkok.

GAYĀ

The Lord stayed near Gayā at Gayāsīsa together with a thousand monks.[1]

Gayā is one of the seven sacred cities of Hinduism. Even at the time of the Buddha, Hindus were coming to this city to perform ceremonies for departed parents and to bathe in the Phalgu River, rites that are still performed here. The most sacred places for Hindu pilgrims at Gayā are the Vishnupada Temple, the Akshayavat Temple with its famous 'undying banyan tree,' and the Brahmakund Tank. However, despite its overwhelming association with Hinduism, Gayā is also significant to Buddhists because it was the scene of several memorable events in the Buddha's career.

After having spent his first rains retreat at Sārnāth, the Buddha returned to Bodh Gayā where he converted Uruvelā Kassapa, Nadi Kassapa and Gayā Kassapa together with their 1000 disciples. Accompanied by all these newly-ordained monks, the Buddha then proceeded to Gayā where he delivered several discourses. There is no evidence that he ever returned to Gayā, probably because it was a center for religious rituals with which he had little sympathy. In the Vatthūpama Sutta he says:

> If you speak nor lie nor harm any living being,
> If you do not steal, are not mean and have faith,
> What can you do by going to Gayā?
> Gayā is no different from the well-water at home.[2]

What to See

Brahmayoni

This prominent hill rising above the town was known in the Buddha's time as Gayāsīsa. According to Buddhaghosa, the hill's original name was Gajasīsa—Elephant's Head—because of its resemblance to a crouching elephant, and the town took its name from the hill, Gayā being a variant of '*gaja*.' It was here that the Buddha delivered his third discourse, the celebrated Fire Sermon, Ādittapariyāya Sutta, to the 1000 newly-ordained monks.[3] The ancient commentary says that the Buddha and his audience sat on a large flat rock while the discourse was delivered. No single rock this big can be seen today, but the shoulder beside the main summit has a large flat area of exposed rock on its top that could comfortably accommodate a thousand people. The faint traces of what was probably a stupa can be seen on the side of this area. To get there walk up the stairs and just after passing through the pavilion halfway up, take the

rough path to the left. There is a fine view from here across the Phalgu and beyond to Pragbodhi.

In another interesting discourse we are told that, while looking out from Gayāsīsa, the Buddha could see people bathing in the river in the belief that they could wash away the evil they had done. He then uttered this verse:

> Not by water is one made pure,
> Though many people may here bathe.
> But one in whom there is truth and Dhamma,
> He is pure, he is a brahmin.[4]

Towards the end of the Buddha's life, Devadatta split the community of monks and went off with his 500 followers to stay at Gayāsīsa where King Ajātasattu built them a monastery. The Buddha sent Mahā Moggallāna and Sāriputta to reason with the schismatic monks and they eventually convinced them to return.[5]

When Huien Tsiang visited Gayā, there were only about a thousand families living in the town. By that time Gayāsīsa had been given an importance related to the ascension of kings. He says: 'From olden days it has been the custom for the ruling sovereign when he comes to the throne, with a view to conciliate his subjects at a distance and to cause his renown to exceed previous generations, to ascend the mountain and declare his succession with accompanying ceremonies.' Huien Tsiang also mentions a stupa on the top of the hill built by King Asoka.

There is evidence of pilgrims still coming to Gayāsīsa up to the second half of the 16th century. At that time the Tantric siddha Prince Rāmagopala visited 'all the great pilgrimage places of the Victorious One as well as all the groves and cities as if on an amazing and fantastic pleasure trip.' Among the places he went were Kukkutapadagiri, Gijjakuta and Gayāsīsa. Today Brahmayoni is considered sacred by Hindus and it is believed that if one can crawl through the hole in the rock near the top of the hill one will have a favorable rebirth. Brahmayoni is the last hill one passes when leaving Gayā on the old road that follows the river to Bodh Gayā.

Surjikund

In the middle of Gayā is a large tank known as Surjikund where Hindus come to perform ritual ablutions. The tank is a rectangular body of water surrounded by a high wall made of huge blocks of well-dressed stones and with a ghat at one end. It was at this tank that the events described in the Sūciloma Sutta took place.[6] At the side of the tank was a tower-like structure called Tankitamanca in which the ogre Sūciloma (Spiky Hair) lived. It is interesting to note that this same tower is mentioned in the *Mahābharata* where it is called Brahmaripa. Sūciloma attempted, unsuccessfully, to frighten the Buddha and then asked him a question, threatening to throw him over the river if he could not answer. 'From



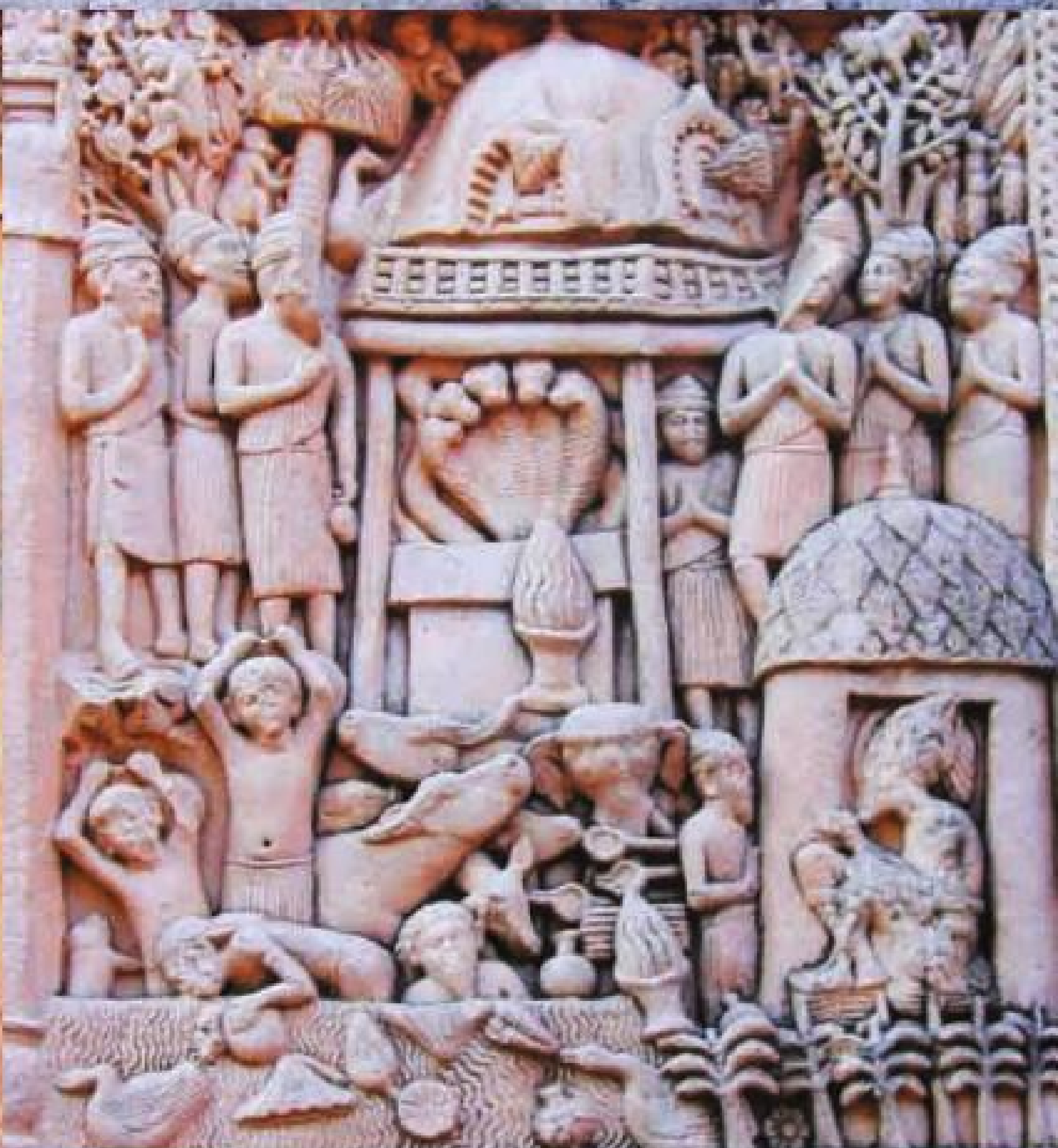

BUDHA FOOT PRINT

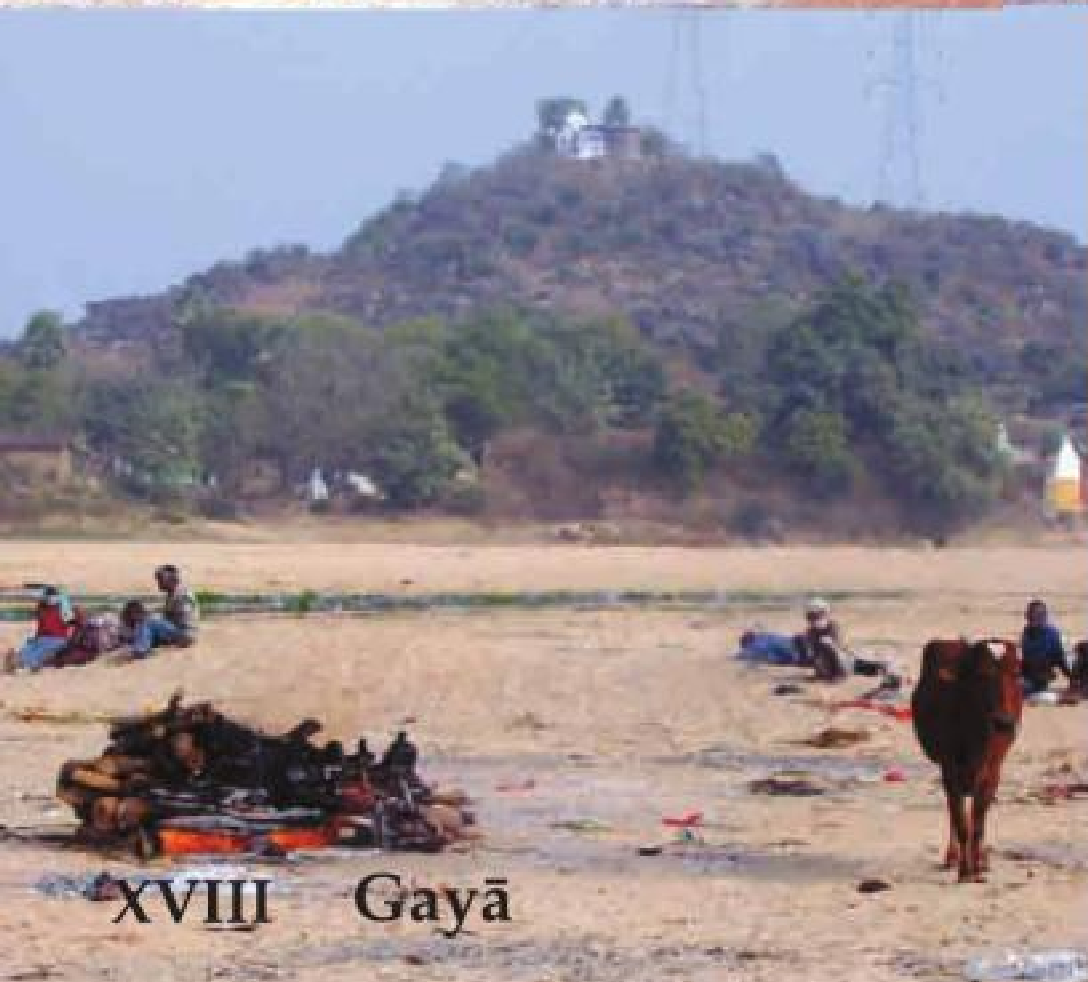












XVIII Gayā



where,' Sūciloma asked, 'do passion and hatred spring? From where do like, dislike and fear arise? From where do evil thoughts arise and harass the mind as boys do a crow?' The Buddha answered in part:

> Passion and hatred spring from egoism,
> As do like, dislike and fear.
> Evil thoughts, too, spring from egoism,
> And harass the mind as boys do a crow.

No traces of Tankitamanca can be seen today, but the tank's name is obviously derived from Sūciloma and at the foot of the sacred tree, near the ghat, there are several ancient sculptures including some Buddhist stupas. To get to Surjikund take the road leading to the Vishnupada Temple. About 100 meters before the temple, a small alley branches off to the left. Proceed down the alley and turn right.

Sitakund

Numerous Hindu temples in and around Gayā have Buddhist antiquities in them, some brought from Bodh Gayā, others from now vanished Buddhist temples that once existed in the city itself. When the English surveyor Francis Buchanan visited Gayā in 1811, he commented that many of the buildings in the town were constructed in part of stones taken from Bodh Gayā. If the pilgrim walks to the river directly behind the Vishnupada Temple and looks towards the other bank, he or she will see a small hill with a cluster of temples nestled at its foot. This picturesque collection of temples and shrines is called Sitakund and the hill is called Prabhas. In the courtyard of the uppermost temple is a large round stone with a single Buddha's footprint on it. This interesting object is similar to several such stones at Bodh Gayā and was probably brought from there. Hindus now worship it as a footprint of Vishnu. Matted-hair ascetics of the type mentioned in the Tipitaka as living at Gayā often congregate around Sitakund.

The Gayā Museum

The Gayā Museum is housed in a shabby, almost derelict building and has a small collection of Buddhist and Hindu sculptures found in and around Gayā. The museum is supposed to be opened from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM each day and closed on Mondays. In actual fact, it is only open during the few times the curator comes. The museum is the building next to the Dak Bungalow just near the Gayā Court.

How to Get There

Gayā is on the main northern railway about 200 kilometers east of Vārānasi. It can also be reached by train from Patna, a trip of about 118 kilometers.

PRAGBODHI

In the Mahā Saccaka Sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya* the Buddha gives a vivid description of the terrible austerities he practiced in the six years before his enlightenment, but as to where he stayed during this period he gives no hint.[13] It is very likely that he stayed around Rājagaha and later around Gayā. In Huien Tsiang's time, tradition said that the Bodhisatta stayed in a cave on the side of a mountain called Pragbodhi ("Prior to Enlightenment") before finally deciding to go to Bodh Gayā and there is no reason to doubt this tradition. Pragbodhi, now called Dhungeswara, is situated about six and a half kilometers to the north-east of Bodh Gayā. The mountain itself is a part of a chain of peaks extending in a north-south direction for about 6 kilometers. Half-way up the mountain at the base of a steep cliff is a small temple maintained by several friendly Tibetan monks. Just above the temple is a small cave in which, tradition says, the Bodhisatta took shelter. Taking the rough path from the temple to the top of Pragbodhi, the pilgrim is rewarded with a magnificent view across the countryside. The peak is rugged and treeless, and the vultures soaring above only seem to emphasize the silence. Below, the pilgrim will see the foundations of a large monastic complex and on the top of the mountain, the ruins of several ancient stupas. The peaceful environment around Pragbodhi, its wild beauty and the powerful presence that can be felt in the cave, make it well worth a visit.

HOW TO GET THERE

Take a rickshaw or bus from Bodh Gayā along the old Gayā road that follows the river to the village of Kiriyama. The village is situated where the second line of pylons crosses the river. Walk across the river and proceed through the paddy fields towards the mountain. Recently a road has been built to Pragbodhi and it is now possible to go all the road by vehicle. Vehicles can be hired in Bodh Gayā.

Pragbodhi









SĀRNĀTH

Then I, walking on tour, in time arrived in Benares, at Isipatana, the Deer Park, and there met the five monks.[1]

After the Buddha attained enlightenment at Bodh Gayā, he decided to teach the liberating truths he had discovered. As his two former teachers, Alara Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, had both died, he decided to seek out his five former companions and present his Dhamma to them. With his supernormal powers he came to know that they were staying in the Deer Park (*Migadaya*) at Isipatana, now called Sārnāth, near Vārānasi, and so he set out to find them.[2] These five companions had abandoned him after he gave up his austerities, accusing him of 'reverting to the life of luxury.'[3] As the Buddha approached the Deer Park and the five ascetics saw him, they decided they would not stand up to greet him. But as he came closer, they were entranced by the utterly peaceful expression on his face, and one by one they spontaneously rose from their seats. At first they refused to believe that he was as he claimed—enlightened. 'Have I ever spoken to you in this way before?' he asked, and they admitted that he had not, and so they decided that they would listen to him.[4] And thus the good Dhamma came to be proclaimed to the world for the first time in a discourse now called the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.[5]

Soon afterwards, he taught his second discourse, the Anattalakhana Sutta after which the five companions, Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assaji, all became enlightened[6]. Later, as the result of listening to the Buddha's teachings, Yasa, the son of a wealthy merchant, and fifty of his friends became monks. The Buddha then commissioned them to spread the Dhamma far and wide: 'Go forth, monks, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the good and the happiness of both gods and men. Let no two of you go in the same direction. Teach the Dhamma which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end. Explain both the letter and the spirit of the holy life, completely fulfilled and perfectly pure.'[7]

And so it was that from Sārnāth the Dhamma began its long journey to the ends of the earth. The Buddha spent the first rains retreat after his enlightenment at Sārnāth and he may have visited it again on several occasions, judging by the number of discourses he delivered here.[8]

In the centuries after the Buddha's final Nirvana, Sārnāth grew into a thriving center of Buddhist scholarship and art. Of the generations of scholar monks who lived here, one of the few whose names is still remembered is Sākyadeva, who wrote a celebrated hymn to the Buddha. In Huien Tsiang's time, there were numerous temples and shrines and

over one thousand five hundred monks. Archaeological investigation has found evidence of Buddhist activity at Sārnāth from the Mauryan period right up to the last half of the 12th century. The place was probably badly damaged when the leader of the Turks, Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazni, raided Vārānasi in 1017, though it recovered enough to continue to function for at least another century. But when the end came, it was a fiery one. Commenting on this, Cunningham said: 'It will have been observed that every excavation made near Sārnāth has revealed traces of fire. I myself found charred timber and half-burnt grain. The same things were found by Major Kittoe, besides the evident traces of fire on the stone pillars, umbrellas and statues. So vivid was the impression of a great final catastrophe by fire fixed in Major Kittoe's mind, by the discoveries made during his excavations, that he thus summed up his conclusions to me in a few words: "All has been sacked and burnt, priests, temples, idols, all together. In some places, bones, iron, timber, idols, etc. are all fused into huge heaps; and this had happened more than once." '

Because Sārnāth came to public attention earlier than any other Buddhist site and because many of the excavations there were unscientific, a large number of Sārnāth's art treasures have been destroyed. Jagat Singhe demolished the Dharmarājika Stupa and removed considerable amounts of stone from the Dharmek Stupa in 1794. Carved stones from Sārnāth have been found embedded in the walls of several mosques in Vārānasi, although when this was done is not known. When a bridge in the village of Khalispur some 80 kilometers from Vārānasi collapsed in the 1950s, many sculptures believed to be from Sārnāth were found amongst the masonry, and apparently still lie there. Cunningham took care to remove many of the sculptures he found during his excavations in 1835–36 to Calcutta where they can still be seen in the Indian Museum, but the sculptures which he did not remove, nearly 60 cart-loads, were used in the foundations of a bridge in Vārānasi. During the time Major Kittoe was digging at Sārnāth, he was also supervising the construction of Queen's College in Vārānasi and it is believed that part of the college is built of sandstone from Sārnāth. Properly conducted excavations at Sārnāth were done in 1904 and 1907 and again in 1914–15.

Today the modern pilgrim will find Sārnāth, with its well-kept gardens and its deer park, one of the most peaceful and pleasant of all Buddhist sites in the Middle Land.

What to See

Asoka's Pillar

Originally over 12 meters high and crowned with the magnificent lion capital now in the museum, Asoka's pillar was a most fitting monument to the important event that took place nearby. The inscription reads, minus the first two lines which are fragmentary:

'... the Sangha cannot be split. Whoever, whether monk or nun, splits the Sangha must be made to wear white clothes and live somewhere other than in a monastery. This order should be made known in the community of monks and of nuns. Beloved-of-the-Gods speaks thus: Let one copy of this edict be put in the cloister of the monastery, and give another one to the lay followers. The lay followers may come each full moon day to acquaint themselves with this edict. On every full moon day, each Mahāmatra should go to the temple in order to acquaint himself with this edict and to understand it fully. And as far as your jurisdiction extends, you are to dispatch orders to this effect. In all fortified towers and districts, have an order to this effect sent out.'

This edict may well have been issued by Asoka just after the Third Council during which, tradition says, schismatic monks and nuns were expelled from the Sangha. The same edict with minor differences is to be found on pillars in Sāñchī and Allahabad. When discovered in 1904, the broken shaft of the pillar still stood in its original position, indicating that it was not shattered by falling over but rather by being hit with a tremendous force, perhaps the spire of the Mūlagandhakuti collapsing on it.

Mūlagandhakuti

This shrine was built at the site of the original hut in which the Buddha resided during his stay in Sārnāth, hence its name, 'The Original Fragrant Hut.' In later centuries it evolved into a huge structure. Huien Tsiang saw it and described it thus: 'In the great enclosure is a temple about 200 feet high; above the roof is a golden-covered figure of a mango. The foundations of the building are of stone, and the stairs also, but the towers and niches are of brick. The niches are arranged on the four sides in a hundred successive lines, and in each niche is a golden figure of the Buddha. In the middle of the temple is a figure of the Buddha made of copper. It is life-size, and he is represented as turning the wheel of the Dhamma.'

The thickness of the walls indicates that the Mūlagandhakuti could have easily been as high as Huien Tsiang estimated, and odd pieces of carved stones embedded in the walls indicate that it was rebuilt at least once using parts of an earlier structure. The shrine in its present form was built in the early Gupta period. Among the small votive stupas close to the west side of the Mūlagandhakuti was found a fragment of a stone umbrella with a part of the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta inscribed on it. It reads:

'There are, O monks, these Four Noble Truths. What four? The Noble Truth of suffering, the Noble Truth of the cause of suffering, the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering, and the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.'[9]

The inscription, which dates from about the 3rd century CE, is written in Pali and indicates that the Pali *Tipitaka* was known and used in Sārnāth at that time. This interesting inscription is now displayed in the museum.

Asoka Railing

On the south side of the Mūlagandhakuti is the railing that was originally placed on the top of the Dharmarājika Stupa. This remarkable object is carved out of a single block of Chunar sandstone and has the high polish characteristic of most Mauryan stonework. The rings in the corners of the railings probably had chains attached to them which in turn were attached to the shaft of the stupa's umbrella.

Dharmarājika Stupa

The close proximity of the Asoka's pillar and the main shrine makes it clear that the Dharmarājika Stupa marks the site of the Buddha's first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. When Huien Tsiang saw the stupa, it was over 30 meters high. Sadly, only the foundations of this once beautiful structure still survive. In 1794, the local Maharaja, Jagat Singhe, had the stupa demolished to provide building material for a market being built in Vārānasi. While work was in progress, a large stone box containing a relic casket was found, as well as an inscribed statue of the Buddha. The charred bones from the casket were committed to the Ganges, the stone box is still somewhere in the dusty cellars of the Indian Museum in Calcutta, and the casket itself has disappeared. Years later, when Cunningham heard about the statue, he made a determined effort to find it so that the inscription could be read, and he actually succeeded. It proved to be a statue of the Buddha in the gesture of teaching, and the inscription mentioned a Bengali king who had restored the stupa and made donations of lamp posts and ornamental bells. Cunningham was also able to recover the stone box that was found when the stupa was demolished.

Apsidal Temple

Directly to the west of Asoka's pillar are the foundations of a small temple dating from the Mauryan period. Its early date, and the fact that the temple faces Asoka's pillar, leaves little doubt that this temple was built by the great king himself. On the railing at Bodh Gayā, there is a depiction of a temple which gives a good idea of what this apsidal temple may have looked like, and may even be a representation of this temple itself. The temple was a long open-ended hall with a circumambulatory passage around it, and had a barrel-vaulted roof. Rather than a stupa at the end of the hall, as is the case in the apsidal cave temple in Maharastra, this temple probably enshrined a pillar with a Dhamma Wheel on it. During excavation of this temple in 1904, an interesting collection of sculptured fragments was found, all made of highly polished Chunar sandstone.

Several human heads, regal in appearance and in one case crowned, were amongst these fragmentary sculptures and may have been a part of a diorama of King Asoka and his family or entourage worshipping at Sārnāth. Some of these sculptures can now be seen in the Archaeological Museum while several others are in the National Museum in Delhi. The apsidal temple was destroyed by fire some time after the Gupta period, and another structure was built over it.

Gupta Period Shrine

On the south side of the main path leading to the Mūlagandhakuti is an ancient shrine now protected by a cement shelter. Made of carved terracotta bricks, this shrine is interesting because it is made to resemble one of the four-square temples (*pancayatana*) of the Gupta period, none of which survive, thus giving a glimpse of what these structures may have looked like. There are two floors, towers on each corner, decorated lattice windows and pilasters on either side of the door. The shrine would originally have had a Buddha statue on it.

Monastery 5

This monastery, probably dating from the Gupta period, is laid out on the usual plan of cells built around a central courtyard. The stone pillars that once supported the verandah can still be seen, and there is a well in the courtyard. On the northern side of the monastery was the shrine room. Cunningham has some interesting comments on discoveries that were made when this monastery was excavated: 'The destruction of this large monastery would appear to have been both sudden and unexpected, for Mr. Thomas records that Major Kittoe found "the remains of ready-made wheaten cakes in a small recess in the chamber towards the northeast angle of the square." Mr. Thomas himself also found portions of wheat and other grain spread out in one cell. These discoveries would seem to show that the conflagration had been sudden and rapid as to force the monks to abandon their very food. Such also is Mr. Thomas' opinion, conveyed in the following vivid description: "The chambers on the eastern side of the square were found filled with a strange medley of uncooked food, hastily abandoned on their floors, pottery of everyday life, nodes of brass produced apparently by the melting down of the cooking vessels in common use. Above these again were the remnants of charred timbers of the roof, with iron nails still remaining in them, above which again appeared broken bricks mixed with earth and rubbish to the height of the extant walls, some six feet from the original flooring. Every item bore evidence of a complete conflagration, and so intense seems to have been the heat that in portions of the walls still standing, the clay which formed the substitute for lime in binding the brick-work is baked to a similar consistency with the bricks themselves. In short, all existing indications lead to the necessary inference that the destruction

of the building, by whomsoever caused, was effected by fire applied by the hand of an exterminating adversary, rather than by any ordinary accidental conflagration."

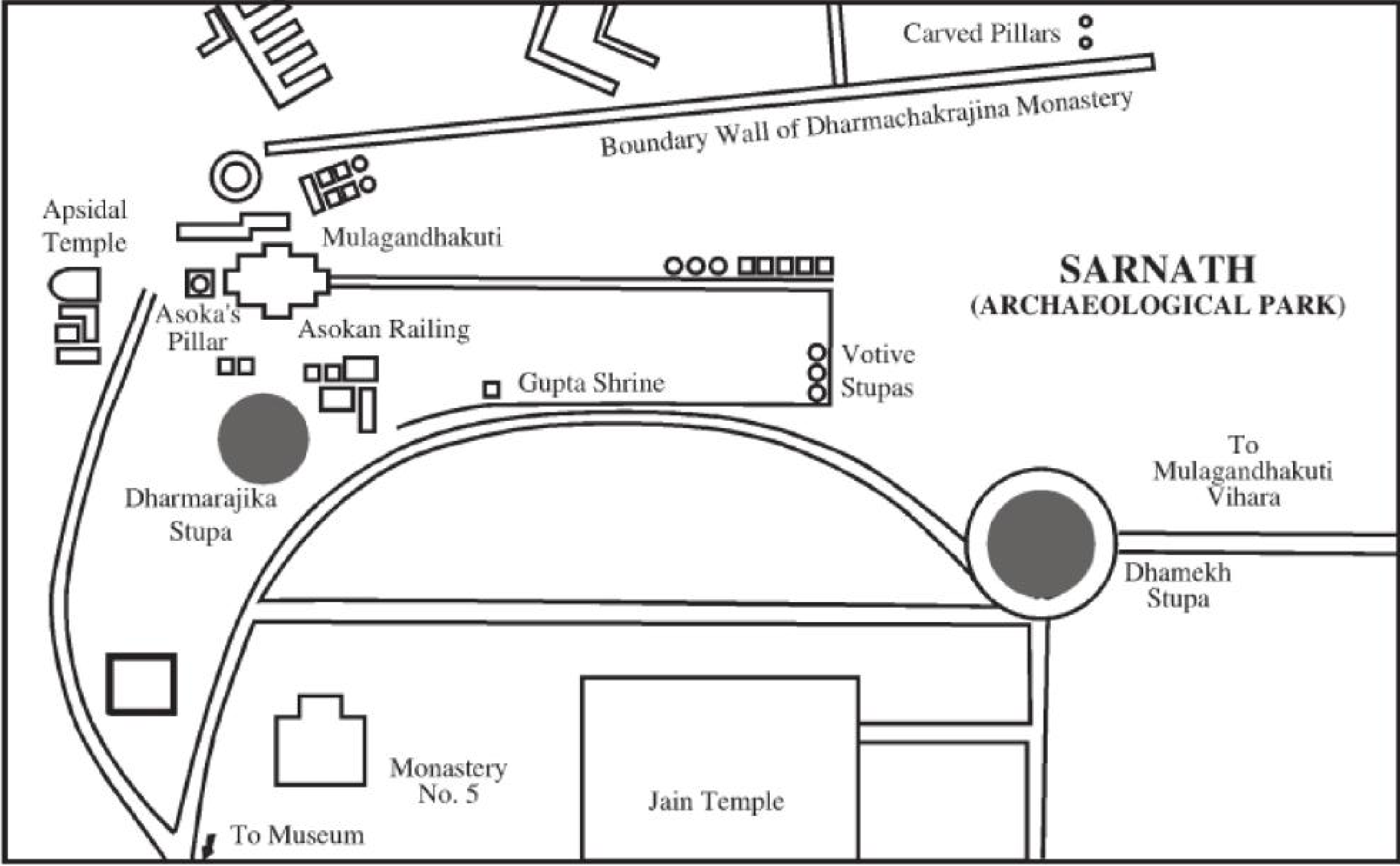
The Dharmek Stupa

Some distance east from the main ruins is the massive Dharmek Stupa. Exactly what this stupa was built to commemorate is not clear; perhaps it marks the site of the teaching of the Buddha's second discourse, the Anattalakkhana Sutta. The stupa is about 28 meters in diameter and about 33 meters in height. The lower part of the stupa is made of large stones held together by iron brackets, some of which are visible at the foundations on the northern side, while the upper part of the stupa is made of brick The original outer stones on the west side of the stupa are missing, having been plundered by Jagat Singhe, and here the pilgrim will notice mason's marks carved on some of the stones. Around the stupa are eight projecting faces tapering to a point, each one with a niche which must have originally held a statue. Around the middle of the stupa is a band of intricately carved stonework. The upper and lower edges of this band consist of lotuses with soft curling stems, while the center of the band, as if in contrast, consists of sharply angled geometrical patterns. On the southwest side of the stupa, the pilgrim will also notice a figure holding two lotuses. To the figure's left there is a frog above the two geese on the lotus leaves. In ancient times during special festivals, beautifully embroidered cloths were often placed around stupas and this carving may be a representation in stone of such a cloth. Cunningham spent three years from 1834 excavating inside the Dharmek Stupa. He started digging a shaft from the top down and later linked it up to a tunnel he dug inwards from the top of the stonework. He discovered that the stupa was solid stone from the ground level up to 10 meters and that every stone was held together with at least eight iron clamps. But months of laborious digging and a cost of more than 500 Rupees yielded not a single relic.

The Dharmek Stupa was first built during the Mauryan period, although the stone facing that the pilgrim can see today dates from the Gupta period. A little to the northeast of the Dharmek Stupa is a collection of small votive stupas. One of these is nearly complete and gives a good idea of what the Dharmek Stupa might have looked like during the Gupta period.

Dharmachakrajina Monastery (Monastery 1)

All along the northern extent of the ruins are the remains of the last and indeed the largest monastery ever built at Sārnāth. A beautifully carved inscription found near the site and now in the museum tells us the circumstances surrounding the building of this monastery. King Govindachandra of Kanauj (1114–54) was a Hindu but his queen


SARNATH
(ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK)
Carved Pillars
Boundary Wall of Dharmachakrajina Monastery
Apsidal Temple
Mulagandhakuti
Asoka's Pillar
Asokan Railing
Votive Stupas
Gupta Shrine
Dharmarajika Stupa
To Mulagandhakuti Vihara
Dhamekh Stupa
Monastery No. 5
Jain Temple
To Museum

Kumāradevī was a devout Buddhist. The king is described as an incarnation of Vishnu whose task it was 'to protect Vārānasi from the wicked Turushka soldiers,' possibly a reference to recent skirmishes with Muslim soldiers. The inscription also describes Kumaradevi's physical and spiritual qualities: 'Her mind was set on religion alone; her desire was bent on virtues; she had undertaken to accumulate a store of merit; she found a noble satisfaction in bestowing gifts; her gait was like that of an elephant; her appearance charming to the eye; she bowed before the Buddha, and people sang her praise; she took her stand in the play of commiseration, was a permanent abode of luck, annihilated evil, and took her pride in abundant virtue.' It seems that Kumāradevī had the monastery built to enshrine an ancient and revered Buddha statue called Sri Dharmachakrajina which was believed to date from the time of King Asoka.

Because the Dharmachakrajina Monastery was built over the foundations of two earlier monasteries which have also been exposed, the outline of this huge structure is not easy to make out. The monastery consisted of a group of buildings surrounded by a wall, the southern side of which is more than 230 meters long. The main gate is to the east and in the northwest corner of the complex is a long underground tunnel, the exact purpose of which is not known. Walking around the monastery the pilgrim will notice two elaborately carved pillars and finely carved brickwork along the base of some walls.

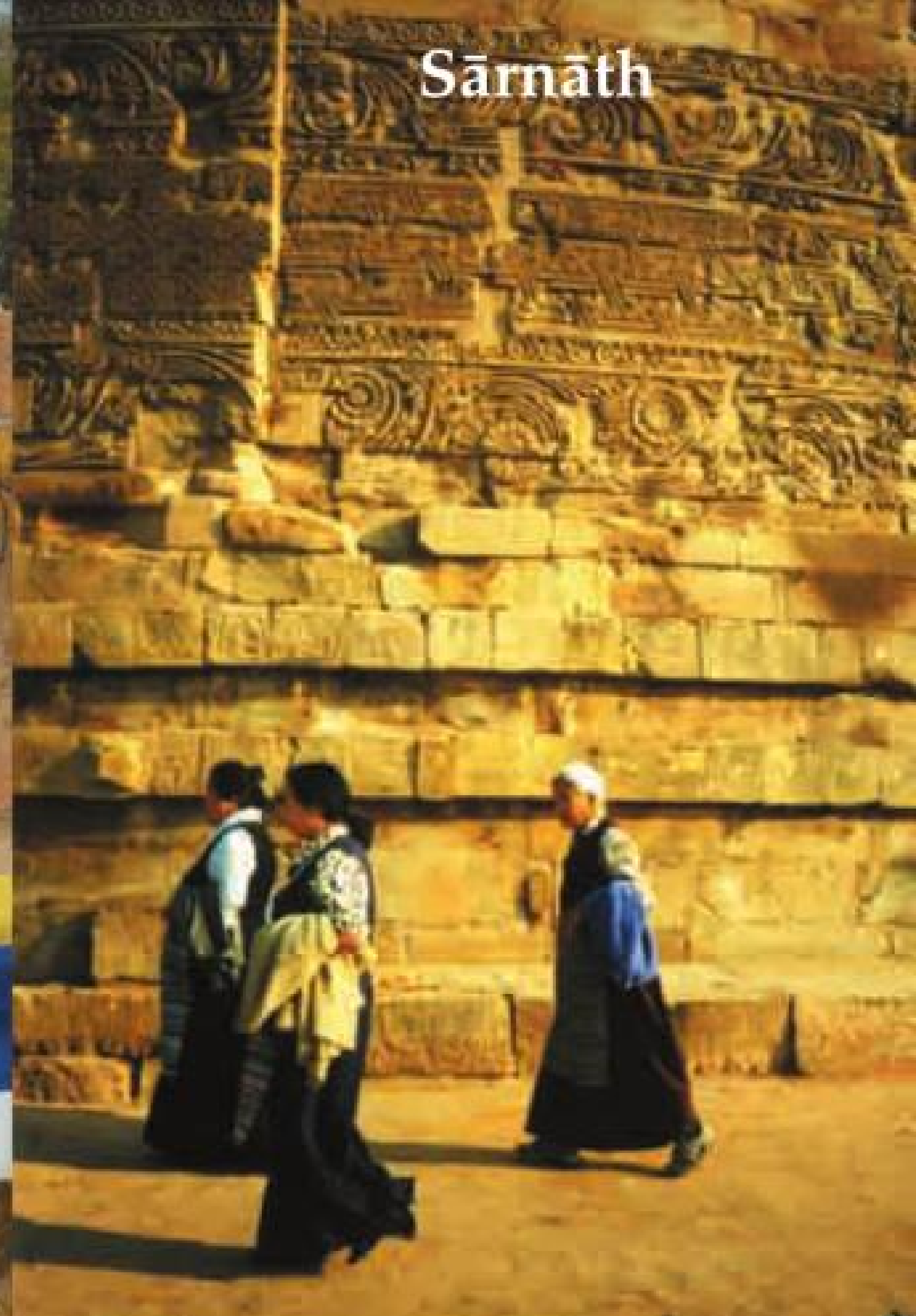
Chaukhandi

About one kilometer from the main ruins on the Vārānasi-Sārnāth road is a large mound with an octagonal tower on it, now known as Chaukhandi. Excavations indicate that this structure consisted of a large temple built on three terraces, each one smaller than the lower one. Huien Tsiang gives us some idea of what it looked like and what it was built to commemorate: 'Leaving this place and going 2 or 3 li to the south of the monastery, there is a stupa about 300 feet high. The foundations are broad and the building high, and adorned with all sorts of carved work and with precious substances. There are no successive stages with niches; and although there is a standing pole erected above the cupola, yet there are no encircling bells. By the side of it is a little stupa. This marks the spot where Aññā Kondañña and the other men, five in number, declined to rise to salute the Buddha.' The octagonal tower on top of the mound was built in 1588 to commemorate a visit by the Mogul emperor, Humayun, and affords a fine view of the surrounding countryside.

Archaeological Museum

The Archaeological Museum at Sārnāth houses a magnificent collection of Buddhist sculptures. Entering the museum, the first thing the pilgrim sees is the lion capital that once crowned Asoka's pillar. Measuring 2.31























meters high, the capital consists of three parts, the fringe, the drum and the four lions. The fringe is often mistakenly described as an 'inverted lotus' but as can be seen, it does not look anything like a lotus. As the art historian Irwin says: 'Can we really imagine artists of ancient India having depicted their most sacred of flowers with so little regard of feeling for its true floral character?'

Four realistically carved animals proceed in a clockwise direction around the drum. These animals, revered for their nobility in ancient India, represent the Buddha or the enlightened person, who is variously compared to the bull, the thoroughbred horse, the lion, and the bull elephant.[9] Between each animal is a Dhamma Wheel each of which originally had a bronze cap on the hub. Above the drum are four roaring lions standing back to back with their paws placed directly above the Dhamma Wheels. These animals represent the Buddha's 'lion's roar,' his bold and confident proclamation of the Dhamma to the four directions.[10] Above the lions was a Dhamma Wheel, fragments of which can still be seen in the museum. The carving of the capital is crisp, the surface is smooth and shiny, and the craftsmanship is of the highest quality. One could hardly imagine a more appropriate symbol for the place where the Dhamma was proclaimed to the world for the first time. The Republic of India has adopted Asoka's lion capital as its national emblem.

On the left of the lion capital is a large statue of Prince Siddhattha, dating from the Kushāna period and very likely carved in Madhurā. The statue's garments are realistically represented, giving an excellent idea of how the clothing of the time was worn. Between the Bodhisattva's legs is a lion, and beside the left leg is a bunch of leaves, fruit and flowers. Behind the statue is an umbrella shaft with an inscription on it indicating that the statue was made in about 123 CE. The inscription reads: 'On the twenty-second day of the third month in the third year of the reign of the great King Kanishka, on this date the monk Bala, a master of the Tripitaka, and his fellow monk, Pushyavuddhi, erected at Benares the gift of the Bodhisattva and an umbrella with a shaft at the place where the Lord used to walk; together with his parents, masters, teachers and pupils, the nun Buddhamitrā versed in the Tripitaka, the satraps Vanaspara and Kharapallana, and the four classes, for the welfare and happiness of all beings.' Obviously, this beautiful gift was possible due to the joint effort of a group of friends. It is interesting to note that statues donated by the same monk Bala have been found at Madhurā and Sāvatthī, and the nun Buddhamitrā is mentioned on an inscription from Kosambī.

There are also two other inscriptions on the statue itself, one on the base between the statue's feet and one on the back. Both of these are just shorter versions of that on the shaft. In the far left corner of the main hall of the museum, the pilgrim will see the umbrella that once sheltered this statue. The umbrella is three meters in diameter and is adorned with

several concentric circular rings, each beautifully carved. The innermost circle consists of a lotus with its pericarp and its half-open and fully open petals clearly represented. Next to this is a band containing strange animals in rectangular panels which alternate with lotus rosettes enclosed in squares. All the animals are winged and have lion, elephant, goat, camel, goose and crocodile heads. The next band contains twelve auspicious symbols. From the top going clockwise, they are a conch shell (damaged), a palmette, a pot with lotuses, a *fleur-de-lis*, two fish, the symbol of the Three Jewels, a palmette, a cup of leaves and garlands, a bowl of fruit, a swastika, and another palmette. The outer ring once again has lotus petals on it. The pilgrim will notice the outside rim of the umbrella has small holes in it about half a meter from each other. These would have once contained small hooks for devotees to suspend garlands and streamers.

At the end of the north gallery is the justly famous Teaching Buddha. This beautiful statue was found during the 1904–5 excavations just to the south of the Dharmarājika Stupa and may have been one of several that originally once sat in niches around the stupa. This statue, probably made in the last half of the 5th century CE, represents the Buddha delivering his first discourse, which is indicated by the hands in the gesture of turning the Dhamma Wheel. The Dhamma Wheel flanked by two deer and the five monks is on the pedestal. The other two figures, a woman and a child, may represent the donors of the statue. The wheel was used in ancient India as a symbol of kingly power and success, and was adopted by Buddhists as a symbol of the Dhamma which, as said in the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta, was 'set in motion' by the Buddha at Sārnāth and cannot be 'turned back' once set turning. The deer symbolize the Deer Park where the Dhamma was first taught, but may also represent the devout Buddhists who, the Buddha says, should have a mind like a deer (*miga-bhūtena cetasā*)—gentle, alert and quick to notice danger.[11] The museum is open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and is closed on Fridays.

Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra

Some way east of the ruins, through the gardens, is the Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra, built by the great Anagārika Dharmapāla in 1931. In many ways, the temple represents the universality of the Buddha's teachings. Mrs. Mary Foster, Anagārika Dharmapāla's Hawaiian patron, provided most of the funds for the temple. The frescoes on the walls of the temple were painted by the famous Japanese artist, Kosetsu Nosu, and paid for by an English Buddhist, B.L. Brownton. The temple's portico and beautiful front doors were donated by Buddhists from Sri Lanka and representatives from almost every Buddhist country were present for the inauguration of the Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra on 11th November 1931.

The paintings on the walls of the Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra:

The south wall:

(1) The Bodhisattva in the Tusita Heaven awaiting to be reborn;

(2) Mahā Māyā's auspicious dream at the Bodhisattva's conception;

(3) The Bodhisattva's birth in Lumbinī Park;

(4) Prince Siddhattha spontaneously attaining jhana while watching his father perform the annual ploughing festival;

(5) The Four Sights that prompted Prince Siddhattha to renounce the world in quest of truth;

(6) The prince taking his last look at his wife and newborn child before leaving the palace.

The west wall:

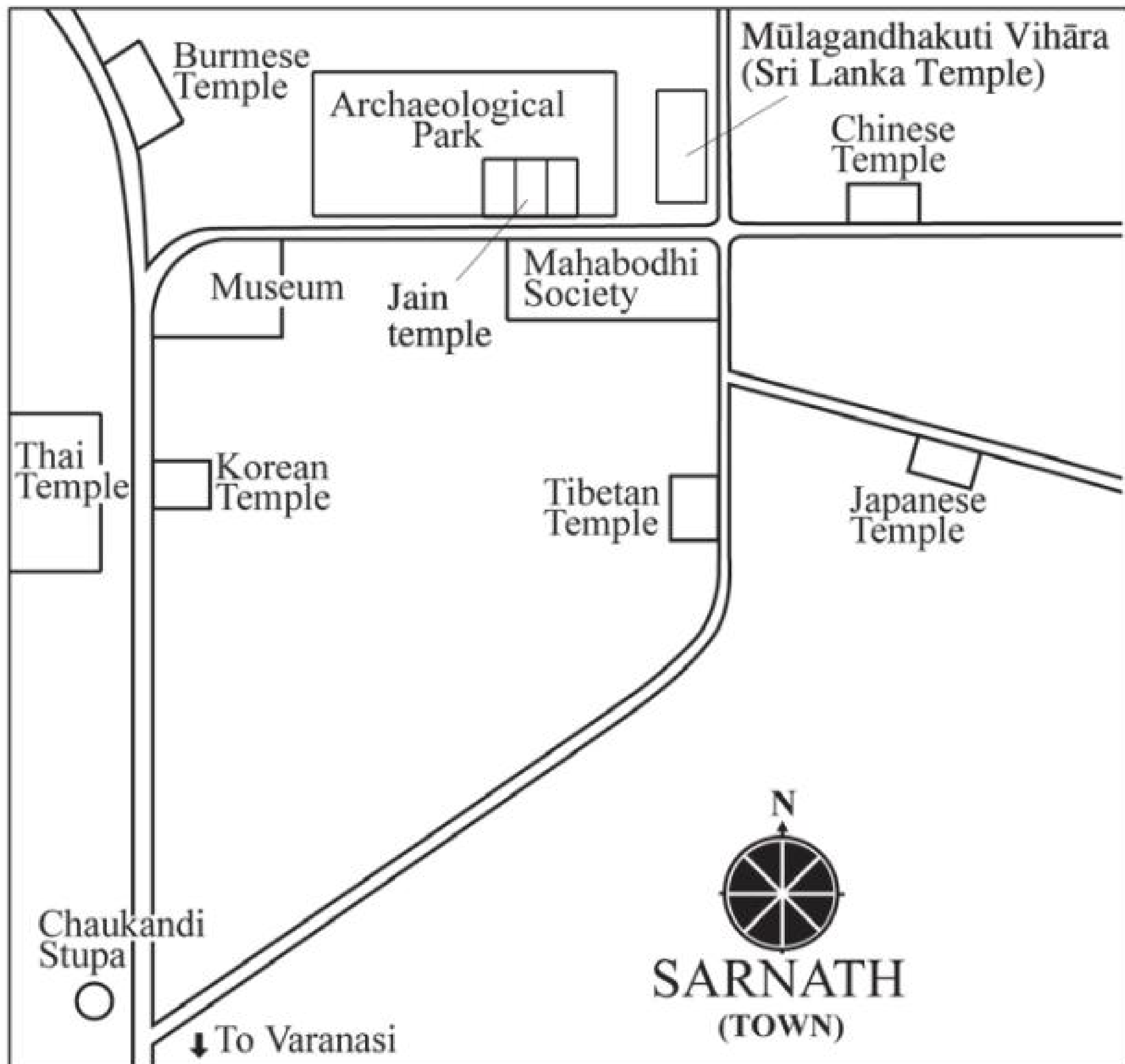
(7) Accompanied by Channa and mounted upon his steed Kanthaka, the Bodhisattva riding into the night;

(8) Taking instruction from his teachers;

(9) Weakened by years of austerities, the Bodhisattva accepts food from Sujātā while his five companions look on with disapproval;

(10) Māra and his army attacking;

(11) The Buddha being greeted by the five companions who had



formerly abandoned him as he arrives in Sārnāth to teach them the Dhamma;

(12) Preaching to King Bimbisāra;

(13) Anāthapindika's purchase of the Jetavana.

The east wall:

(14) The Buddha and Ānanda nursing a sick monk who has been neglected by his fellow monks;

(15) The Buddha reconciling the Sakyans and the Koliyans who are about to go to war over the water in the Rohini River;

(16) The Buddha returning to Kapilavatthu;

(17) The Buddha attaining final Nirvana while Anuruddha exhorts the monks not to cry. On the right is the wandering ascetic Subhadda who became the Buddha's last disciple;

(18) The Buddha teaching the Abhidhamma to his mother in the Tāvatimsa Heaven;

(19) The conversion of Angulimāla;

(20) Devadatta and Ajātasattu scheming to kill the Buddha and King Bimbisāra;

(21) Ānanda asking a girl to give him some water. She hesitates, saying that she is an outcast. Emphasizing the Buddhist rejection of the Hindu caste system, Ānanda says to the girl: 'I did not ask you what your caste was. I asked you for water.' The story is from the *Divyāvadāna*.

The main shrine in the Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra contains relics believed to be those of the Buddha, found in a stupa at Taxila and another one at Nāgārjunakonda and presented to the Mahabodhi Society by the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin. Behind the shrine is the small stupa containing the ashes of Anagārika Dharmapāla. Directly behind the temple itself is a park for deer, and right behind that is a monument marking the site where Dharmapāla's body was cremated. To the right of the main path leading to the entrance of the temple is a statue of Anagārika Dharmapāla, arms folded in front of him, looking down sternly.

Modern Temples

Apart from the Mūlagandhakuti Vihāra, there are several other modern temples in and around Sārnāth. A little to the southwest of the Dharmek Stupa is the Shreyanahnath Jain temple originally built in 1824. The walls inside this quiet and attractive temple are decorated with interesting frescoes depicting events in the life of Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism, an older contemporary of the Buddha. The Chinese temple was built in 1939 with funds provided by the famous Singaporean banker, Lee Choong Seng. The Burmese temple, just beyond the north-west corner of the ruins, was first built at the beginning of the 20th century and contains a white marble Buddha statue. The Tibetan temple, belonging to the Gelugpa sect, was built in 1955. The walls of the temple are covered

with paintings and behind it is a stupa commemorating those who died in the Lhasa uprising of 1959. A beautiful new Japanese temple can be found near the Tibetan temple. The Thai monastery, just beyond the museum, was founded in 1971, has a fine temple and is set in beautiful peaceful gardens. The most beautiful temple in Sārnāth is the new Vidyadhara Institute just behind the Deer Park. To get there walk past the Burmese Temple and take the first turn on the right.

Some 3 kilometers out of Sārnāth is the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, which has a library with an atmosphere of peace and scholarship.

How to Get There

Sārnāth is 13 kilometers from Vārānasi, which is on the main northern railway line. From Vārānasi it is easily reached by rickshaw or bus.

Around Sārnāth

Bharatkala Bhavan

Situated in Benares Hindu University in Vārānasi, this museum contains a small but superb collection of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain sculptures as well as other artifacts. The exhibits are well displayed and lit. The Buddhist collection includes Buddha statues from the Gupta period found in Vārānasi, several Pāla period illuminated manuscripts, and a magnificent 14th century Indo-Tibetan *thanka*. The museum is open from 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM, and during May and June from 7:00 AM to 12:30 PM, and is closed on Sundays and university holidays. The Bharat Kala Bhavan is in the university next to the Faculty of Music.

RĀJAGAHA

Yes, my good man, this road leads to Rājagaha. Go along it for a while and you will see a village; go further and you will see a market town, go further still and you will see Rājagaha with its delightful parks, its delightful woods, its delightful meadows and its delightful ponds.[1]

Rājagaha, now called Rājgir, is one of the oldest continually inhabited sites in India. During the Buddha's lifetime it was the capital of the kingdom of Magadha and was the largest city in the Middle Land. The city and its many natural landmarks are often celebrated in ancient Buddhist, Jain and Hindu literature. The Buddha himself says of the city and its environs: 'Delightful is Rājagaha. Delightful is Gijjhakūta and Gotama Nigrodha. Delightful is the Robber Cliff and the Sattapanna Cave on the side of Vebhara. Delightful is Black Rock on the side of Isigili and Sappasondika Pabhara in the Cool Wood. Delightful is Tapodārāma and the Squirrels' Feeding Place in Veluvana. Delightful is Jīvakambavana and the Deer Park at Maddakucchi.'[2] Asvaghosha, the great Buddhist poet, says the city is 'distinguished by five mountains, guarded by and decorated with peaks and supported and purified by hot springs.' The five mountains that surround the old part of the city are now called Vaibhara, Vipula, Ratna, Sona and Udaya, while the names given in the Tipitaka are Vebhara, Vepulla, Pandava, Gijjhakūta and Isigili. Nestled as it is amongst these mountains, Rājagaha was also sometimes known as Giribhaja, the Hill Fort.[3]

After his renunciation, Prince Siddhattha came to Rājagaha, probably to make contact with the many ascetics who frequented the caves, forests and crags around the city. King Bimbisāra saw him begging for alms in the streets and was deeply impressed by his noble bearing. Discovering that the young ascetic was staying on the east side of Pandava (modern Ratna), he set out to visit him.[4] When Prince Siddhattha told Bimbisāra that he was from a noble family, the king offered to give him a high position in his court if he would return to the worldly life. The young prince politely declined the offer but promised that if and when he attained enlightenment he would return and teach the truths he had discovered to the king. And so he did. After his stay at Gayā, the Buddha set out with his thousand monks for Rājagaha, eventually stopping at Latthivana, the Palm Grove.[5] This place is now identified with a small village southwest of Rājagaha and interestingly enough retains its original name, now being known as Jethian, a Hindi contraction of Latthivana. King Bimbisāra came with a large retinue to welcome the Buddha and accompanied him into the city. When the three Kassapas,

who were old, revered and well known, were seen with the Buddha, who was by comparison so young and at that time virtually unknown, some people were not sure who was the teacher and who the disciple. So Uruvelā Kassapa 'rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, bowed his head towards the Lord's feet and said: "Lord, the Lord is my teacher, I am the disciple."'[6]

It was also at this time that two people who were to become the Buddha's chief disciples became monks. Moggallāna and Sāriputta were childhood friends who had become disciples of Sañjaya, one of several wandering teachers who were popular in Rājagaha at that time and who is said to have had 250 disciples. One day Sāriputta saw a Buddhist monk on his alms round and asked him about the Dhamma. What he heard impressed him and he repeated it to his friend, Moggallāna, who then and there resolved to become a disciple of the Buddha. When Sañjaya heard that he was about to lose his followers, he offered to make them co-teachers if they would stay, but the two friends went over to the Buddha together with all of Sañjaya's other students.[7] The incident caused considerable interest in Rājagaha and further increased the Buddha's reputation.

However, it was also in Rājagaha that some of the Buddha's disciples turned against him towards the end of his life. Devadatta, his proud and ambitious cousin, asked the Buddha to retire so that he could lead the Sangha, a request the Buddha firmly turned down. Humiliated at being rejected, Devadatta plotted murder. A rock was rolled down on the Buddha as he was walking up and down in the shade of the Gijjhakūta, injuring his foot.[8] When this scheme failed, Devadatta induced the mahouts in the royal stables to release Nālagiri, a huge and irascible elephant, into the Buddha's path. One morning as he walked through Rājagaha on his alms round, the Buddha found himself confronted by Nālagiri. The monks accompanying him urged him to turn back but he calmly kept walking. People climbed onto the roofs of the houses to see what would happen. 'Those with little faith, who did not believe, with little understanding said: "This recluse is good to look upon, but he will be hurt by this bull elephant." Those with faith, who believed, who had wisdom and understanding said: "This great being is about to meet a truly great being." The Buddha suffused Nālagiri with loving-kindness, so that he calmed down and then stood beside the Lord, who stroked his head.'[9]

The Buddha spent the second, third and fourth rains retreat after his enlightenment in Rājagaha, visiting again thirteen and fifteen years later and once again in the year before his final Nirvana. He delivered more discourses here than in any other place except Sāvatthī. Shortly after the Buddha's final Nirvana, the capital of Magadha was shifted to Patna and Rājagaha went into decline although it remained a center of Buddhism for many centuries.

General Alexander Cunningham visited Rājagaha twice (in 1861–62 and 1871–72) to try to identify sites mentioned in Buddhist scriptures and in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, and since that time archaeologists have dug around the city on several occasions. Most of the places of interest to Buddhists are scattered over a fairly large area, so visiting them requires much walking. Pilgrims to Rājagaha are sometimes attacked by robbers and are advised not to proceed to the hills or forests unaccompanied.

What to See

New Rājagaha

By the Buddha's time, Magadha had become powerful and confident enough to move its capital out of the mountains where it had long settled and onto the plain. Exactly when this was done is not mentioned in the Tipitaka, but Fa Hien attributes the building of the new city to Ajātasattu, while Huien Tsiang was told that it had been built by Bimbisāra. It is very likely that both built the city, the son completing what the father began. In Fa Hien's time there were two monasteries within the walls, but even then the city's glory had long since declined, and when Huien Tsiang visited two centuries later, he found only deserted ruins. The walls of New Rājagaha form an irregular rectangle five kilometers in length and in some places they reach nearly three and a half meters high. If the pilgrim climbs to the top of the western wall, a large mound will be observed towards the west. This is the remains of a huge stupa built by King Asoka. Archaeological excavation here in 1905 and 1906 revealed several stupas built one on top of the other, the earliest one dating from the Mauryan period. A modern road runs through New Rājagaha and a little to the right of where it cuts through the southern wall the pilgrim will see the old main gate of New Rājagaha.

Ajātasattu's Stupa

Leaving New Rājagaha by the road and proceeding south about half a kilometer, the pilgrim will see on the left a structure made of large stones with pillars on top. This marks the site of the stupa that King Ajātasattu built over the one-eighth portion of the Buddha's relics that he received. The stupa has long since fallen into ruin, been rebuilt and used for other purposes, so that it is now impossible to envisage its original size or shape.

Makhdum Kund

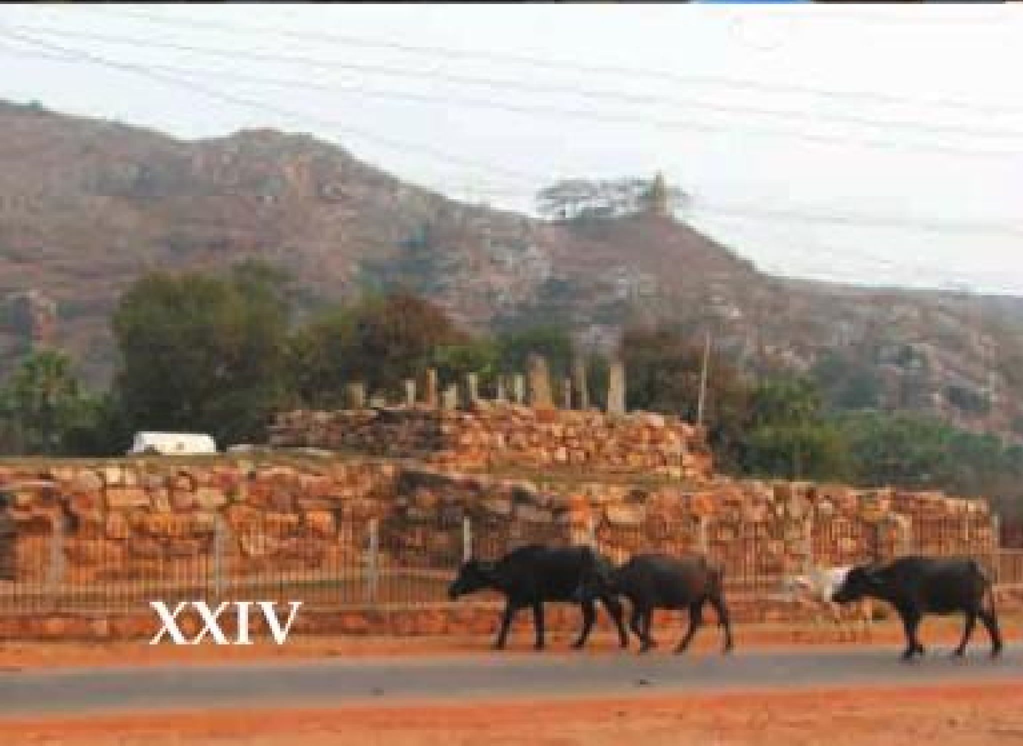
When Huien Tsiang was in Rājagaha, he was shown a stone with unusual red spots on it. According to legend, these red spots were the blood of a monk who had killed himself in despair at ever attaining enlightenment. There are several stories in the Tipitaka of monks in Rājagaha having




Rājgir









committed suicide although which one is associated with the stone Huien Tsiang saw cannot be determined. This famous stone is now in the small Sufi shrine of Makhdum Kund and local Muslims associate it with one of their saints. To get there proceed south along the main road from Ajātasattu's stupa, take the first turn on the left and proceed towards the foot of the hill. The stone, now broken into several pieces and much worn, is on the floor of the small pavilion built on the side of the cliff. Non-Muslims are allowed to enter, just go in and walk up the stairs. Inside the main mosque is a small cave which Huien Tsiang mentions as a place where Devadatta used to sometimes stay. The hot spring at Makhdum Kund is quieter and less crowded than the one at the Lakshmi Narian Temple and a good place to have a bath.

The Veluvana

When the Buddha returned to Rājagaha after his enlightenment, King Bimbisāra saw he needed a place of residence that was 'not too far from a village, not too near, suitable for coming and going, accessible to people whenever they want, not crowded during the day and with little noise at night, quiet, without folks' breath, a place of privacy, suitable for living in seclusion.'[10] He had a pleasure park called Veluvana, the Bamboo Grove, because of the many stands of bamboo that grew there. Since it was not far from the main north gate of the city, he decided to offer it to the Buddha. The transferring of the ownership of the park was done in the traditional way, by pouring water over the hand of the receiver: 'King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha, having taken a ceremonial vessel made of gold, dedicated it to the Lord, saying: "Lord, may I give this Veluvana pleasure park to the Sangha with the Buddha at its head? " And the Lord accepted the park. Then the Lord, having gladdened, rejoiced, inspired and delighted the king with talk on Dhamma, and having arisen from his seat, departed.'[11]

There were several locations in the Veluvana including the Squirrels' Feeding Place, the Peacocks' Feeding Place and the Sumagadha, a beautiful lotus pond which the Buddha sometimes referred to and which is the only one of these places that can still be located.[12] On the north side of the Sumagadha is a beautiful Buddha statue recently erected by Japanese Buddhists. The shady and peaceful Veluvana became the scene of some of the Buddha's most important discourses—the Abhayarājakumāra Sutta, the Rathavinīta Sutta, the Mahā Vacchagotta Sutta and dozens of others.[13] It was here that the nun Dhammadinnā delivered the Culavedalla Sutta to Visākha, and the novice Aciravata delivered the Dantabhūmi Sutta to Prince Jayasena.[14] According to the Tibetan tradition, Asanga built a small temple at the Veluvana and lived there for some years. When Fa Hien came here, he found a temple, and the monks who lived there maintained the Veluvana by sweeping the paths and watering the trees. Crossing the small stream, the pilgrim enters the Veluvana and sees to the left a

collection of mounds under which no doubt lie the remains of stupas and shrines. The area was excavated in 1905 and 1906 and a few minor antiquities were found.

Tapodārāma

From the Veluvana, it is a short walk through the market to a bridge across a stream which leads one to the foot of Vibhara Hill. Climbing the stairs one approaches the Lakshmi Narian Temple. In the Buddha's time, this whole area was known as Tapodārāma, Hot Water Park, and he and his disciples often visited here to bathe in the Tapoda Pool which was fed by several hot springs. Mahā Moggallāna described the Tapoda Pool as being 'deep, transparent, cool, tranquil, clear, with a good landing place, full of fish, tortoise and round blooming lotuses.'[15]

Ānanda once came here to bathe and meeting the ascetic Kokanuda, had a discussion with him and we are told in the Mahā Kaccana Bhaddekaratta Sutta that the monk Samiddhi was approached by a deva here as he dried himself after a bath.[16] There is little doubt that these hot springs must have been popular with monks who wanted a hot bath on a cold Indian winter morning. When Huien Tsiang visited Rājagaha, the Tapodārāma had already grown into a proper public bath. He says: 'At the mouth of the various hot springs, there are placed carved stones, sometimes shaped like lions and at other times like the heads of white elephants, sometimes stone conduits are constructed, through which the water flows on high whilst below there are stone basins in which water collects like a pond. Here people of every region and from every city come to bathe; those who suffer from any disease are often cured. On the right and left of the warm springs are many stupas and the remains of monasteries close together. In all these places, the four past Buddhas have sat and walked, and the traces of their so doing are still there. These spots being surrounded by mountains and supplied with water, men of conspicuous virtue and wisdom take up their abode here, and there are many hermits who live here also, in peace and solitude.'

Today, the hot springs form part of the temple, though non-Hindus are allowed to use the baths. The sylvan environment of the Tapodārāma as the Buddha knew it is gone but the pilgrim will still find its hot waters pleasant and refreshing.

Pipphali Cave

Leaving the Lakshmi Narian Temple and following the path up the hill, the pilgrim soon comes to a tower made of huge rough stones. This tower once formed a part of the northern fortification of the old city. One of the several openings at the base of this tower, probably the largest one, was known in the Buddha's time as the Pipphali Cave and was often used as a residence by Mahā Kassapa. Once, the Buddha visited Kassapa here when he was sick and talked to him about the seven Factors

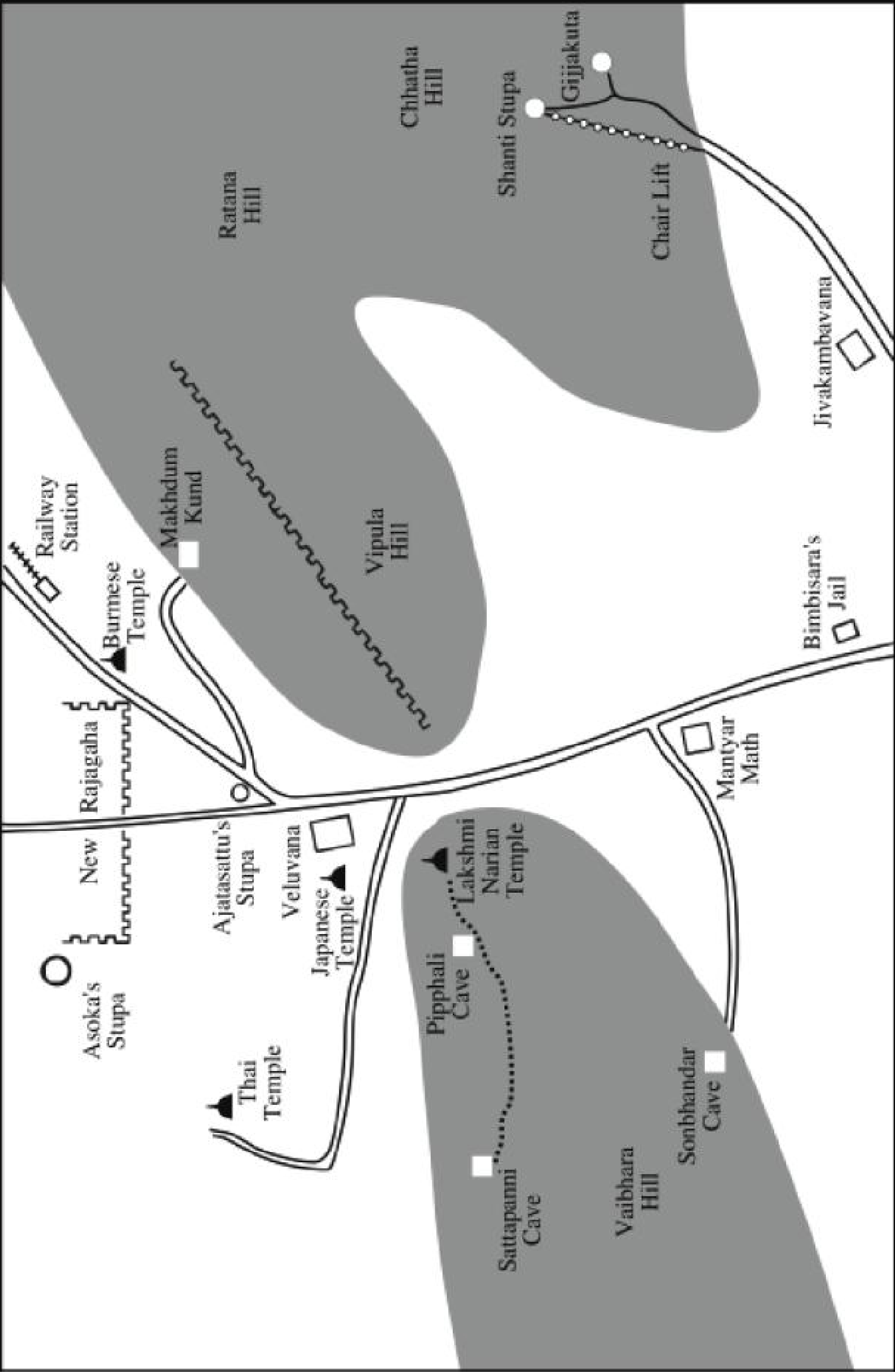
of Enlightenment.[17] We also read that Kassapa once sat absorbed in concentration for seven days in the Pipphali Cave.[18]

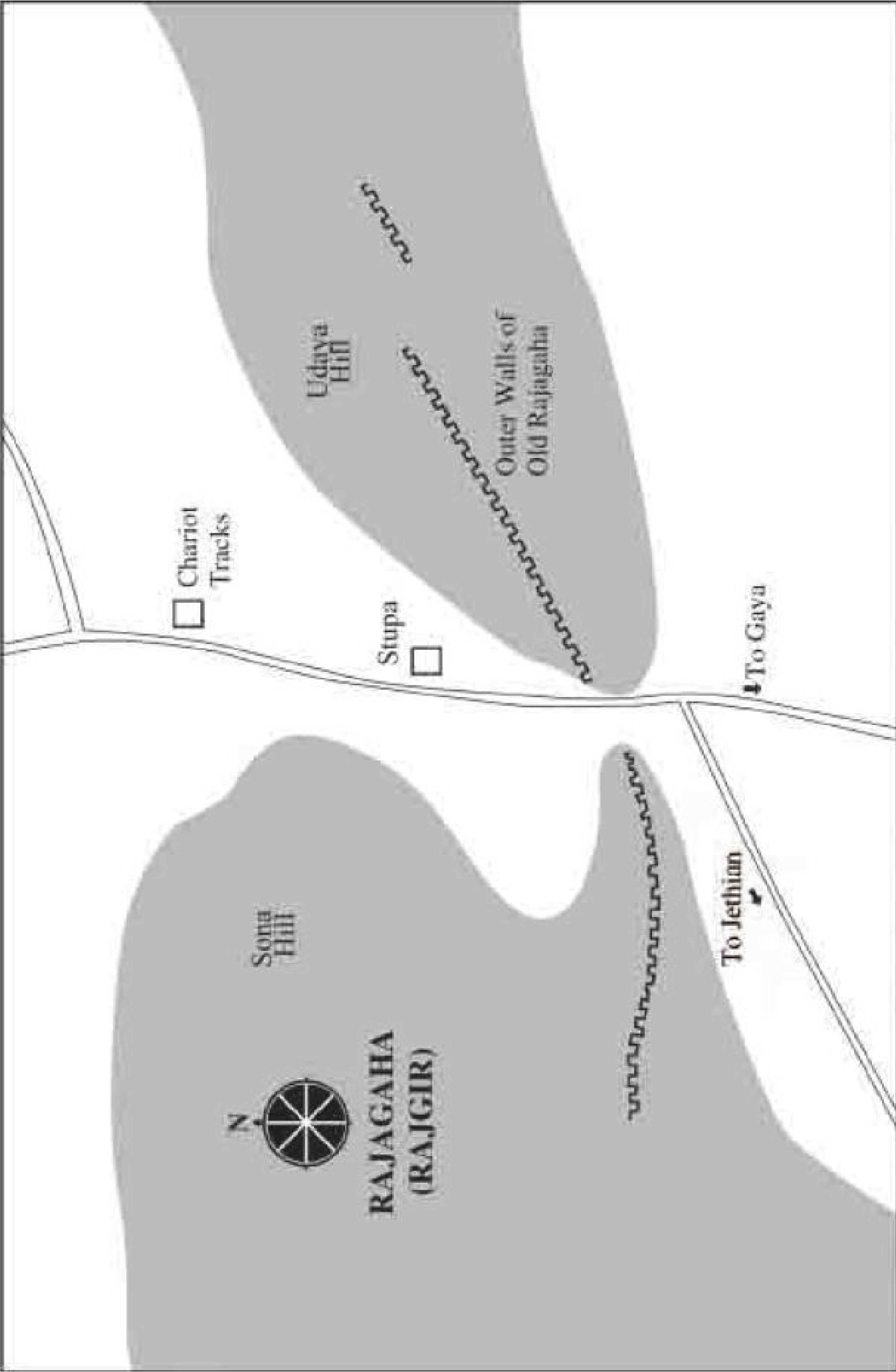
The Sattapanni Cave

At the top of the hill the path forks to the left, leading to an ancient Jain temple and a Hindu temple, the first of which still contains a dozen or so finely carved statues. If the pilgrim returns to the main path and continues further, the path eventually turns to the right and leads down the side of the hill to the Sattapanni Cave. The cave got its name from a Seven Leaf Tree (*Alstonia scholaris*) that used to grow near its entrance. This rocky and isolated place with its breathtaking view of the landscape below was the site for one of the pivotal events in Buddhist history. The Buddha stayed here from time to time and it was sometimes used as a residence for newly arrived monks when no other dwelling could be found for them.[19] But the significance of the Sattapanni Cave lies in the fact that it was here that the First Council was convened in 483 BCE. Three months after the Buddha's final Nirvana, five hundred Arahats met here to recite the Dhamma and the Vinaya so that it could be passed on to future generations. It was Mahā Kassapa who suggested that the council be held 'in the cave named Sattapanni on the northern slope of Mount Vaibhara, on a rocky-surfaced spot of ground shaded by diverse trees.'[20] Rājagaha was probably selected as the site of the council as only a city of that size could provide enough alms-food for such a large number of monks. The *Mahāvamsa* says that King Ajātasattu, in preparation for the council, 'had a splendid hall built by the side of the Vebhara Rock by the entrance of the Sattapanni Cave and it was like the assembly hall of the devas. When it was adorned in every way, he caused precious carpets to be spread according to the number of monks. Mahā Kassapa questioned Upāli on the rules of monastic discipline and Ānanda on the discourses, and when this was finished the whole assembly chanted the Dhamma and the discipline together.'[21] In the following centuries, monks regularly gathered together to chant selected parts of the Dhamma until it was finally committed to writing.

Sonbhandar Caves

From the market, the main road runs south between Vipula Hill on the left and Vaibhara Hill on the right, where the main north gate of Rājagaha once stood. The remains of the city walls can be seen running up the hill on the left. After a little more than a kilometer, a smaller road turns off to the right. Here is to be found the Maniyar Math which seems to have been used as a cult shrine for many centuries. It is probably the Manimalaka Cetiya mentioned as a place where the Buddha was once visited by an ogre.[22] When the Maniyar Math was excavated, some beautiful stucco figures came to light, thought to be the oldest of their type ever found in India. These have long ago disappeared and the site is now of little interest.


Railway Station
Burmese Temple
Makhdum Kund
Vipula Hill
Ratana Hill
Chhatha Hill
Shanti Stupa
Gijjakuta
Chair Lift
Jivakambavana
Bimbisara's Jail
Mantyar Math
New Rajagaha
Asoka's Stupa
Ajatasattu's Stupa
Veluvana
Japanese Temple
Thai Temple
Lakshmi Narian Temple
Pipphali Cave
Sonbhandar Cave
Vaibhara Hill
Sattapanni Cave


Udaya Hill
Outer Walls of Old Rajagaha
Chariot Tracks
Stupa
To Gaya
Sona Hill
To Jethian
N
RAJAGAHA (RAJGIR)

Passing the Maniyar Math and continuing down the smaller road, the pilgrim fords a beautiful stream and eventually arrives at the Sonbhandar Caves. The two caves were carved out of the living rock in the 3rd or 4th century CE for the use of Jain ascetics. The cave on the left has a door and window and once, judging by beam holes on the outer wall, an attached verandah. Outside the doorway to the left is an inscription that reads: 'The Sage Vairadeva, of great luster, the jewel amongst teachers, caused to be made for the purpose of attaining salvation and liberation two auspicious caves worthy of ascetics, in which were placed images of Noble Ones.' The roof of the cave on the right has collapsed and there are figures of Jain Tirthankaras carved on the inner wall.

Bimbisāra's Jail

Returning to the main road again and continuing south for about one kilometer, the pilgrim comes to Bimbisāra' jail, just off the road to the left . This large structure, about 60 meters square, is identified as the place where Bimbisāra was imprisoned by his son, Ajātasattu. Bimbisāra came to the throne at the age of 15 and ruled for 52 years. Ajātasattu was impatient for power and began plotting to kill his father. When Bimbisāra discovered this, he was deeply saddened and he abdicated in favor of his son. Devadatta, the Buddha's ambitious cousin, egged on Ajātasattu to have his father killed, saying: 'You are like a man who put a skin over a drum in which there is a rat.'[23] So the old king was imprisoned and deprived of food, and only the queen was allowed to visit him. She managed to smuggle food in, but when this was discovered she was forbidden to visit. Impatient that Bimbisāra was taking too long to die, Ajātasattu had the old king's veins opened. This large structure is identified as the jail where these events took place, due to the thickness of its walls and to the fact that excavation brought to light cells, one of which contained a manacle. It is also interesting to note that while Bimbisāra was imprisoned, the commentaries say that he could see the Buddha on the Gijjhakūta. The pilgrim will note that the Gijjhakūta can indeed be clearly seen on the horizon towards the east.

Jīvaka's Mango Grove

The main road continues towards the south and eventually forks. Following the left fork, the pilgrim will soon arrive at a clearing in the jungle containing the ruins of the Jīvaka's mango grove. Jīvaka was King Bimbisāra's personal physician and later became a devoted supporter of the Buddha. He also used to attend to the Buddha when he was ill, and according to the commentaries, one day he thought to himself: 'I have to wait upon the Buddha two or three times a day. Both the Gijjhakūta and the Veluvana are too far away. My mango grove is closer. Why don't I build a dwelling there for the Lord?' Accordingly he built 'night quarters and day quarters, cells, huts, pavilions, a Fragrant Hut suitable for the

Lord, and surrounded the mango grove with a copper colored wall eighteen cubits high.' All ancient sources agree that the Jīvakambavana was outside the east gate of Rājagaha and the pilgrim will notice that before arriving at the Jīvakambavana, the road cuts through a long mound and then crosses a bridge. These represent the east wall and the moat of ancient Rājagaha. If the pilgrim climbs under the bridge, he or she will see that the moat has been cut out of solid rock.

The Jīvakambavana was the site of one of the most important of the Buddha's discourses, the Discourse on the Fruits of the Monk's Life.[24] One beautiful moonlit night, King Ajātasattu came to visit the Buddha at Jīvakambavana and was deeply impressed by the silence and stillness of the large assembly. He had only recently had his father killed and was now starting to feel decidedly uneasy, due to guilt and perhaps also to the thought that his own son, Prince Udayibhadda, might one day have him killed, which in fact did eventually happen. Discovering that the fruits of worldly ambitions could at times be bitter, he came to ask the Buddha what the fruits of the spiritual quest were and the Buddha replied with a long discourse describing the complete training of a Buddhist monk. The Buddha also delivered two other important discourses here, both of them to Jīvaka. In the first, the Discourse to Jīvaka, he gives the conditions under which monks can eat meat, and in the second he defines a lay disciple as one who has taken the Three Refuges and observes the Five Precepts.[25] The Jīvakambavana was discovered and excavated in 1954. Although only the foundations remain, the complex is interesting in that it includes three long elliptical halls. The complex dates from before the time when monastery plans had become standard and very likely represents the structure built by Jīvaka.

The Shanti Stupa

Leaving the Jīvakambavana and continuing towards the east, the pilgrim arrives at the chair lift by which one ascends to the top of the Chhathāgiri Hill. A beautiful and well maintained stupa built in 1969 by the famous Japanese Buddhist monk, Venerable Nichidatsu Fuji, stands on the top of the hill. At this point, the hill is very high, and looking north, the pilgrim has a magnificent view across the countryside.

Gijjhakūta

A path leads from the Shanti Stupa down the south side of Chhathāgiri Hill and eventually the pilgrim can see a smaller peak with ruins on it. This is the Gijjhakūta, the Vulture Peak, the Buddha's favorite retreat in Rājagaha and the scene for many of his discourses.[26] According to the commentaries, this place got its name because vultures used to perch on some of the peak's rocks. The several rock shelters around the Gijjhakūta, its fine view across the valley, and its peaceful environment made it the perfect place for meditation. Climbing the steps that lead to the top, the

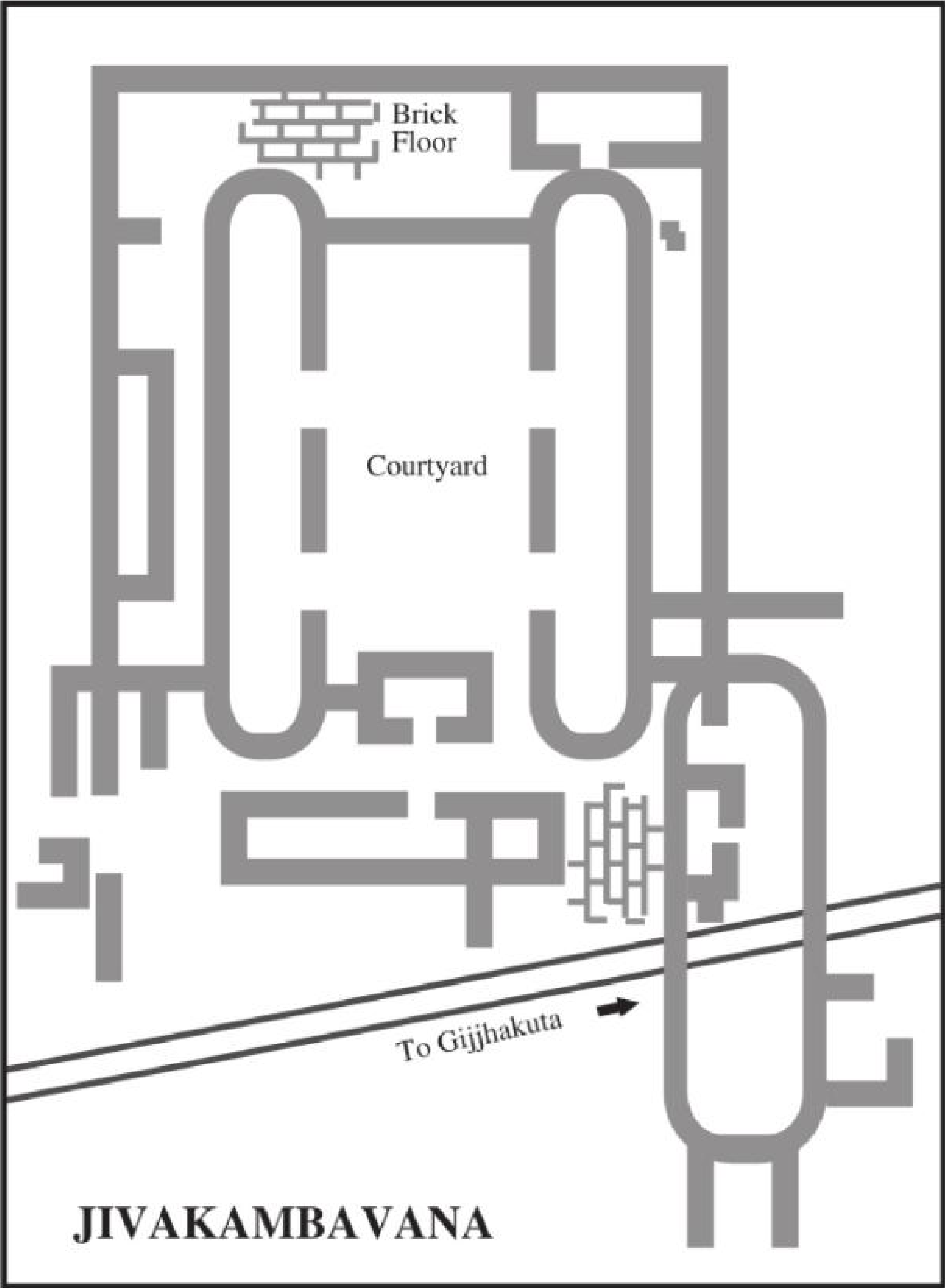
pilgrim passes a large cave. This is the Sūkarakhata Lena (the Boar's Grotto) where the Buddha delivered two discourses, the Discourse to Long Nails and the Sūkarakhata Discourse. It was here too that Sāriputta attained enlightenment.[27]

The Sūkarakhata Lena seems to have been formed by excavating the earth from under the huge rock that forms the grotto's roof, an impression confirmed by legend. According to the Pali commentaries, during the time of Kassapa Buddha a boar rooting around under the rock made a small cavity which was later enlarged when monsoon rains washed more earth away. Later, an ascetic discovered the cave and, deciding it would be a good place to live in, built a wall around it, furnished it with a couch, and 'made it as clean as a golden bowl polished with sand.' Climbing further, the pilgrim can see the ruins of stupas and the foundations of a small temple built on the summit in ancient times. When the simple and devoted Fa Hien came here, he was deeply moved by the atmosphere on the Gijjhakūta. 'In the new city, Fa Hien bought incense, flowers, oil and lamps and hired two monks, long residents in the place, to carry them to the peak. When he himself arrived, he made his offerings with flowers and incense and lit the lamps when the darkness began to come on. He felt melancholy but restrained his tears, and said, "Here the Buddha delivered the Shūrangama Sūtra. I, Fa Hien, was born when I could not meet the Buddha and now I only see the footprints which he has left and the place where he lived and nothing more." With this, in front of the rock cavern, he chanted the Shūrangama Sūtra, remaining there overnight and then returned towards the new city.'

In Dharmasvāmin's time, the Gijjhakūta was 'the abode for numerous carnivorous animals such as tiger, black bear and brown bear,' and in order to frighten away the animals, pilgrims visiting the Gijjhakūta would beat drums, blow conches and carry tubes of green bamboo that would emit sparks. A Buddha statue, dating from the 6th century CE, found on the Gijjhakūta, is now housed in the Archaeological Museum at Nālandā. After seeing the Gijjhakūta, the pilgrim can proceed down the path which leads back to the chair lift. This path is part of the original road built by King Bimbisāra, though much repaired. The foundations of two stupas will be seen along the path. According to Huien Tsiang, one of these is called 'Dismounting from the Chariot' and marks the place where King Bimbisāra got out of his chariot during his first ceremonial visit to the Buddha. The second stupa was called 'Turning back the Crowd' and marks the place where the king, wishing to proceed alone, turned back the throng.

The Chariot Wheel Tracks

The pilgrim should retrace his or her steps past the Jīvaka's Mango Grove back to the main south-bound road and continue along it. About one kilometer down the road and just off it on the left is a stone wall


Brick
Floor
Courtyard
To Gijjhakuta
JIVAKAMBAVANA

surrounding an area of flat exposed rock. For centuries, chariots and carts entering or leaving Rājagaha have passed this way and worn deep ruts in the rock. On the rock near the gate of the compound, the pilgrim will also notice some inscriptions written in so-called 'shell script,' which is yet to be deciphered.

The Walls of Old Rājagaha

Proceeding along the road about another kilometer, the pilgrim arrives at the narrow pass between Sona and Udaya Hills, which formed the southern gate of Old Rājagaha and through which the Buddha must have passed many times. The massive walls climb up both hills and run for over 40 kilometers, although in many places they are now barely visible. Climbing along the walls one can get a fine view of the fields of Magadha. Once, when the Buddha was staying at Dakkhinagiri, the Southern Mountains, very close to Rājagaha and probably somewhere near where the pilgrim now stands, he looked across the fields of Magadha (*Magadhakhetta*) 'laid out in strips, in lines, in embankments and in squares,' and suggested to Ānanda that Buddhist monks' robes should be cut to a similar pattern.[28] At that time the fields were obviously square or rectangular and surrounded by narrow strips that separated one field from another. It is interesting to note that although the shape of Magadha's fields has changed, the robes of Theravada Buddhist monks have, to this day, retained their ancient pattern.

Kālasilā

Just below the road that runs through the pass the pilgrim will notice a small stream with deep pools and a waterfall. This delightful place is thought to represent Kālasilā, the Black Rock. All sources agree that Kālasilā was at the foot of Isigili, which is now called Sona Hill. Even in the heat of summer, Kālasilā is cool and shady and would have been the perfect place for monks to reside, and the Buddha stayed here from time to time. Unfortunately, Kālasilā has rather unhappy associations. It was here that the monk Vakkali, despairing at his prolonged sickness, killed himself.[29] It was here also, according to commentaries, that Mahā Moggallāna was murdered by ascetics jealous of the popularity of Buddhism.[30] The newly excavated structure nearby may have originally been a stupa built to commemorate this event, although in later centuries it was rebuilt as a temple.

How to Get There

Rājagaha (Rājgir) is 100 kilometers by road southeast from Patna and 65 kilometers by road from Gayā and is easily reached from both places by bus.



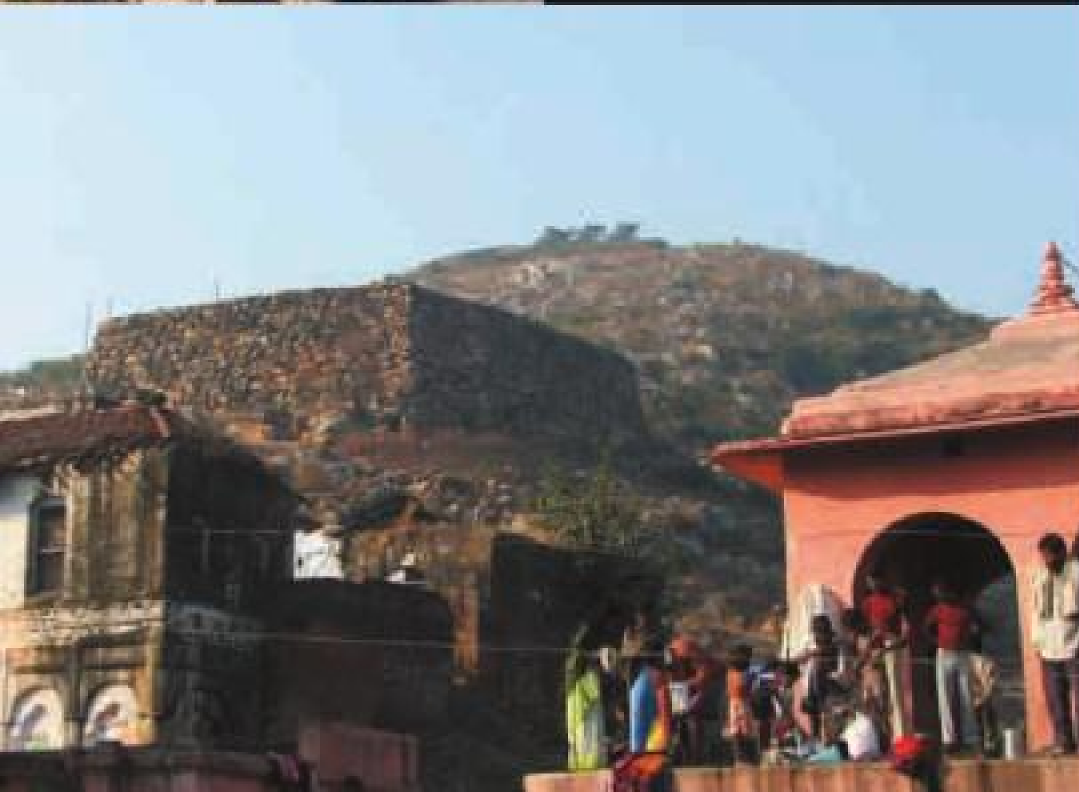
Rājgir

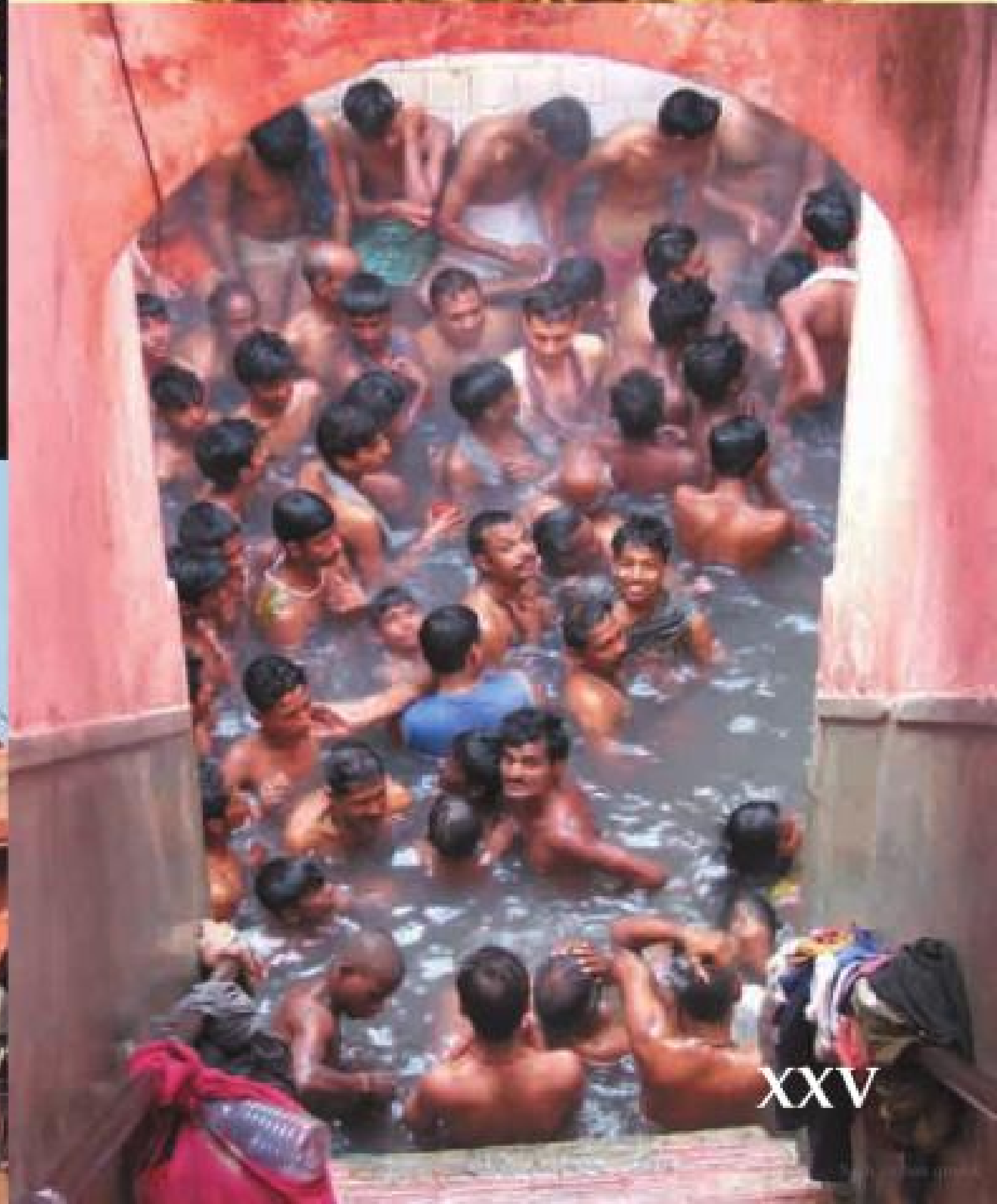
















Rājgir





Around Rājagaha

Indasāla Cave

One of the most celebrated places in Rājagaha, visited by pilgrims for centuries but rarely nowadays, is the Indasāla Cave. It was here that Sakra, king of the devas, came to visit the Buddha and asked his famous seven questions as recorded in the Sakkapañha Sutta.[31] The ancient commentary tells us that when the Buddha left the cave to go to the nearby village each day to get his alms, an owl would accompany him halfway. Verses 206, 207 and 208 of the *Dhammapada* are also said to have been uttered by the Buddha while he was staying here. An inscription found at Gosrawa dating from the 9th century tells us that Vīradeva, the abbot of Nālandā, built a row of stupas here and according to Tibetan tradition, the great Tantric philosopher Buddhasrijnāna lived in the cave at one time. The Indasāla Cave itself is at the base of a sheer cliff halfway up the side of the mountain. It has a large round opening, a relatively even floor, and is 20 or 30 meters deep. Both Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang noticed Sakra's questions inscribed on a rock near the cave, but these cannot be found today. There are the remains of a terrace and a flight of stairs made of roughly cut stones near the mouth of the cave. The view from the Indasāla Cave across the lonely valley to the mountains on the other side is spectacular and it is easy to understand why the Buddha came here when he wished to be away from the crowd.

How to Get There

The Indasāla Cave is on the southern face of Giriyek Mountain, about 1.5 kilometers from its eastern end. Take the Rājgir–Giriyek road about seven kilometers to Giriyek, which is at the very end of the mountain. The road is impassable for vehicles beyond this point. Proceed on foot along the southern side of the mountain for about 1.5 kilometers. The area is lonely and is a well-known haunt for robbers, so the pilgrim should proceed with caution.

Jethian

Latthivana, the place where King Bimbisāra came out to meet the Buddha after his enlightenment, is now a small village named Jethian. In the centuries after the Buddha, the village was the site of several important monasteries, as is clear from the many ruins still to be seen in the surrounding jungle. In the 7th century Latthivana became famous as the seat of the most celebrated saint of the time, the lay meditation master Jayasena. Huien Tsiang spent two years studying with Jayasena and later wrote this of his master: 'The samanas and brahmans, heretics of different schools, the kings of the country, the great ministers, householders and

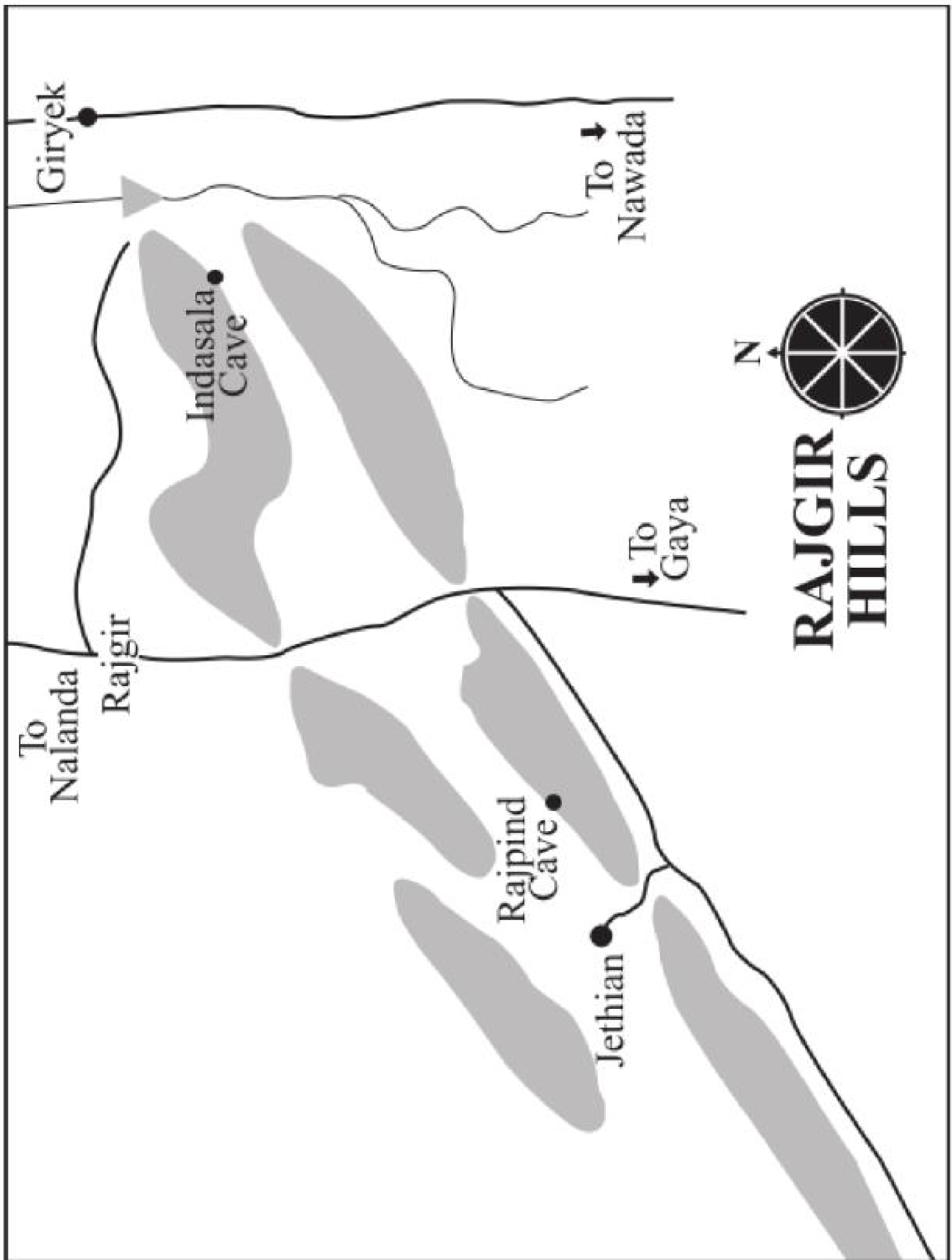
the persons of rank come together to visit him and personally to ask him questions. His pupils occupy sixteen apartments, and although nearly seventy years of age, he reads with them diligently and without cessation, and applies their minds only to the study of Buddhist sūtras, neglecting all other engagements. Thus night and day he gave up body and mind to this pursuit alone.'

A little after entering the valley in which Jethian is situated, the road divides. Taking the right branch, the pilgrim will soon arrive at a large mound with a tank beside it on the left of the road. This must be the remains of the stupa later built over the Supatittha Cetiya, the place where the Buddha stayed while at Latthivana.[32] On top of the mound is a large statue of the Buddha sitting in the so-called European fashion on a throne and several other fragments of sculpture. About half a kilometer further on, the road comes to the Saravoday Vidyalaya, the local village school. In front of the main building is a statue of the bodhisattva Padmapāni, damaged but still impressive; and above it, a statue of the Buddha dating from about the late Gupta period.

About 3 kilometers north-east of the village, on the north face of Chandu Hill, called Antagiri in ancient times, is a cave now called Rajpind. Huien Tsiang was told that the Buddha sometimes stayed in this cave and on one occasion addressed a thousand of his disciples there; certainly it is big enough to accommodate that many people. The pilgrim will notice the remains of a road made of rough stones zigzagging up the side of the mountain. According to what Huien Tsiang was told, this road was built by King Bimbisāra to give access to the cave. Rajpind must be one of the several caves mentioned in the Tipitaka as being in the vicinity of Rājagaha, but exactly which one can no longer be determined. As numerous pigeons nest in its dark interior, it may be the Pigeons Grotto, a cave in which Sāriputta sometimes used to reside.[33] Jethian is surrounded by high rugged mountains and thick jungle making it one of the most attractive villages in Bihār. This, together with its association with the Buddha, makes it well worth a visit despite the difficulties involved in getting there.

How to Get There

Just before the Gayā–Rājgir road enters the narrow pass leading to Rājgir, another road branches off to the left and runs along the southern side of the mountains. After about 14 kilometers this road turns off, climbs the steep incline, and enters the pass leading to Jethian. The road is very rough and dusty and can only be traversed by jeep. The Jethian area is well known for bandits and the pilgrim should proceed with caution, especially around Rajpind Cave.



Kurkihar

The small village of Kurkihar became famous in 1930 when peasants digging for bricks discovered the largest horde of metal statues ever found in India. All the statues were of Buddhist origin dating from the Pāla period and indicated that the village must have been the site of an important monastery in ancient times. Inscriptions found on several of the statues show that the name of the monastery was Apanaka Vihāra.

Most of these statues are now on display in the Patna Museum. The second of the village's two Hindu temples still contains interesting Buddhist antiquities. When the archaeologists S.K. Sarasvati and K.G. Sarkar visited this temple in 1931, they counted sixty sculptures but only about a third of that number can still be seen today. The temple is not old, although the fourteen richly carved pillars supporting the roof date from the 9th century CE.

Outside and to the left of the main entrance is the largest and finest sculpture still existing at Kurkihar, a 1.5 meter high statue of Akshobhya Buddha (Imperturbable Buddha). The Buddha sits cross-legged on a lotus throne with his hands in the earth-touching gesture. The face has a particularly serene expression and the robe on the left shoulder is delicately carved. The throne behind the Buddha is adorned with leogryphs holding garlands in their mouths. The halo behind the head is slightly oval in shape, with a decorated edge, and with the Bodhi tree overlapping it at the top. There are two inscriptions on the surface of the halo. The first is the usual Epitome of Dhamma, and the second, near the head, is the mantra, '*Tun akshobhya vajra hum*.' At the left shoulder of the Buddha is an image of Lochana with one hand in the gesture of bestowing blessings and the other holding a lotus, while on the right is an image of Vajrapāni holding a vajra at his chest. Above these images are two flying devas holding garlands. The whole statue is crisply carved out of gray-black stone and probably dates from the early Pāla period. Inside the temple one finds about twenty additional statues although the features and details of most of them are obscured by dirt.

How to Get There

On the main Gayā–Rājgir road 22 kilometers from Gayā is the village of Wazirganj (also pronounced Vajiraganj). Three kilometers north of the village on a passable road is Kurkihar.

Sitamahi Cave

Like the caves on Barabar and Nagarjuni Hills, the Sitamahi Cave dates from the Mauryan period and has a highly polished interior. The cave itself is cut into a huge boulder which lies in the middle of an open grassy area. Although there is no inscription in the cave, it was probably cut for the use of non-Buddhist ascetics. It is the smallest of all the early rock-cut caves, and is now used as a Hindu temple.

How to Get There

Several kilometers east of Wazirganj is the village of Manzhba, just beyond which is the turnoff to Sitamahi Cave. It is about 11 kilometers off the main road.

Nawada Museum

Being off the main road, Nawada is only rarely visited by tourists or pilgrims though it has a museum of some interest. The museum is in a shabby run-down building but does have a modest collection of sculpture from the numerous Buddhist sites in the district. The most interesting piece is a Buddha statue from Bodh Gayā presented to the museum by the Mahant. This unusual sculpture portrays the Buddha with thick firm limbs, a full round face and a rather stern unsmiling expression: The halo behind the head is round and undecorated and the throne lacks the elaborate leogryphs or attendant bodhisattvas commonly found on statues from the same period. The Epitome of Dhamma is inscribed on the pedestal. The statue dates from the 7th century and is thought to be the earliest representation of the Buddha in the earth touching gesture yet found at Bodh Gayā. The Nawada Museum is open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and is closed on Mondays.

How to Get There

Beyond Wazirganj, on the Gayā–Rājgir road, is Husua. Nawada is 15 kilometers from the Husua turnoff.

Tetrawa and Gosrawa

When Huien Tsiang left the Indasāla Cave, he headed north-east and arrived at a large monastery called Kapotika Vihāra, the Pigeon Monastery, in which two hundred monks were living. This place probably corresponds to one or another of two villages called Tetrawa and Gosrawa in which there were until just recently extensive ruins. When A. M. Broadly explored Tetrawa in 1877, the remains of the ancient monastery were visible everywhere but none of these can be seen today, the village having been built over them or in part built of them. Broadly also counted nearly two hundred Buddhist images 'some of them of exquisite beauty' placed around the local Hindu temple. These too have now all disappeared. On arriving at Tetrawa, the first thing the pilgrim will see is a large tank full of lotuses and water lilies. On the south side of this tank and facing it, is a huge statue of the Buddha nearly 3 meters high and carved out of shiny black chloritic stone. The Buddha is in the earth-touching gesture and sits on a lotus throne below which is a pedestal with five niches on its outer face. The Epitome of Dhamma is written along the lotus petals in script dating from about the 10th century. The central niche and the two outer ones have lions in them and there are figures of devotees in the other two. Over time this huge statue has began to lean slightly and a series of unsightly buttresses have been built behind it to prop it up.

About ten kilometers south of Tetrawa is the village of Gosrawa. An inscription found here in the 19th century mentions that a monk from

what is now Peshawar built a temple here during the reign of King Dharmapāla but unfortunately it does not tell us the temple's name. The ruins of Gosrawa as described by Broadly indicate that it must have been an extensive and magnificent monastery. One of the mounds had a circumference of 60 meters and another was 36 by 21 meters and was nearly 6 meters high. All these ruins have now either been built over or destroyed by villagers digging for bricks and nearly all the sculptures have disappeared, some just recently. However, in the Hindu temple on the edge of the village are numerous Buddhist statues cemented into its wall. The most impressive and interesting of these is an image of the Buddha about 1.5 meters high and dating from perhaps the 9th century. Above the Buddha's head is a stupa with the spreading branches and leaves of the Bodhi Tree coming from behind it. Flanking the Buddha are eight figures, probably meant to be bodhisattvas, although the identities of most are not certain. One holds a sword, another a lotus and another, a female, what appears to be a mirror. On either end of the pedestal below the statue are two lions, with Pathavī, the earth godess, emerging from the earth with a pot in her hand in front of the left one and a devotee in front of the right one. In the middle of the pedestal is a goddess treading down a man while a small figure holds an umbrella over her head. The meaning of these and the other figures is not clear.

How to Get There

About 10 kilometers north of Nawada is the turnoff to Pawapuri.[34] Pass the beautiful white marble Jain temple at Pawapuri, and proceed to the intersection just beyond the village of Drugapur. The road on the left goes to Tetrawa, a further 8 kilometers, and the road on the right goes to Gosrawa, a further 2 kilometers. The Tetrawa road is passable only by jeep.

NĀLANDĀ

Lord, this Nālandā is rich, prosperous, filled with people, crowded with those devoted to the Lord.[1]

The Buddha often stayed at or passed through the village of Nālandā, which is on the main road to the north of Rājagaha. When there, he usually resided at Pāvārika's Mango Grove where he preached the Upāli Sutta and the Kevaddha Sutta. He also taught at Ambalatthika, the royal rest house, which, Buddhaghosa says, was set in a beautiful shady park surrounded by a wall, the buildings within being decorated with paintings[2]. It was here that the Brahmajāla Sutta, the first discourse in the Tipitaka, and the Ambalatthikarāhulovāda Sutta were both preached.[3] While travelling to Nālandā from Rājagaha, the Buddha met the man who was to become his successor, Mahā Kassapa. This famous meeting probably took place in what is now the village of Silao, some 5 kilometers south-west of Nālandā. Ancient sources also point to Nālandā being the birthplace of Sāriputta, one of the Buddha's two chief disciples.

Writing in the 16th century, Tāranātha says that King Asoka came here to make offerings to a stupa in honor of Sāriputta and had a temple erected. When Fa Hien passed this way at the very beginning of the 5th century CE, he saw this stupa but made no mention of any temple, indicating that the great monastic complex of later times had not yet come into existence. But by the time Huien Tsiang came to India two centuries later, Nālandā had already developed into a great university with an international reputation. It seems therefore that it was during the Gupta period that Nālandā Mahāvihāra was founded. This is confirmed not only by Huien Tsiang, who mentions the names of several Gupta kings who built colleges here, but also by archaeological evidence.

Most of what we know about Nālandā's university is derived from donatory inscriptions found on the site and from the accounts of foreign students who studied there. The most famous of these students were Huien Tsiang, who was a student there from 635 to 640 CE, and I Tsing, who studied there for about ten years from 675 CE. Students came to Nālandā from all over India and from Tibet, China, Java and Sri Lanka. I Tsing tells us that one day, while looking through manuscripts in one of Nālandā's libraries, he found a book and written on the colophon were the words: 'The Korean monk Hwui Ywui wrote this.'

Nālandā was actually more like what we would call a postgraduate institute than a university. A student had to be already very accomplished in Buddhist philosophy before even thinking about seeking admission. Huien Tsiang tells us that the gatekeeper would put a series of extremely difficult questions to all who wished to gain admission and only those

who could answer quickly and accurately would be allowed to enter: 'One must have studied deeply both the old and new books before getting admission. Those students, therefore, who come here as strangers have to show their ability by hard discussion. Seven to eight out of every ten fail.'

Despite these stringent standards, at Huien Tsiang's time there were 8,500 students and 1510 teachers. Once admitted, a student became a member of an exclusive group respected for its discipline and love of learning: 'The monks, numbering several thousand, are men of the highest ability and talent. Their distinction is very great at the present time, and there are many hundreds whose fame has rapidly spread through distant regions. Their conduct is pure and unblamable. They follow with sincerity the precepts of the moral law. The rules of this monastery are severe and all the monks are bound to observe them. The countries of India respect them and follow them. The day is not sufficient for asking and answering profound questions. From morning to night they engage in discussion, the old and the young mutually helping one another. Those who cannot discuss questions out of the Tripitaka are obliged to hide themselves for shame.' So much were graduates from Nālandā in demand as court chaplains, poets or historians, as teachers and philosophers, that forging of degrees was not unknown. And it was not just monks who studied at Nālandā; laymen did too. Lay students were of two types, those studying in preparation for being ordained and who were called children and those who simply wished to study secular literature and who were called students. Both had to pay their own expenses.

The curriculum at Nālandā was drawn from all fields of knowledge—Theravada and Mahayana, Buddhism and Brahminism, sacred and secular, philosophical and practical. The study of Buddhist philosophy took precedence but logic, grammar astronomy and medicine were also taught. The discovery of a large number of bronze statues at Nālandā as well as a smelting furnace suggests that image-making and metallurgy may also have been taught. Sanskrit was the medium of instruction though with so many foreign students some teachers could speak non-Indian languages. Dharmasvāmin's teacher at Nālandā was so proficient in Tibetan he was able to translate scriptures into that language.

Such a large center of learning would have needed an extensive library and indeed Nālandā had three: Ratnasagara, Ratnadadhi and Ratnara Ajaka, the first of which was nine stories high. The three buildings were situated in a special area called Dharmaganja (Mart of Dharma). There is evidence that the libraries housed books from different countries and in different languages. We are told that the pilgrim Tao Hsi gifted more than 400 volumes in Chinese to one of Nālandā's libraries. Several of the illuminated palm-leaf books that survive from ancient India are known to have been copied out at Nālandā, indicating that

there might have been a scriptorium at the libraries also. About a hundred different classes were held each day and these might consist of lectures or debates with the teacher sitting on a beautifully decorated Lion Throne (*sīhāsana*). A devotional service was held in the afternoon or evening in each individual college as there were too many monks to assemble together in one place.

There were annual holidays when monks, especially those from distant parts of India and from foreign lands, took the opportunity to visit the many sacred places within reach of Nālandā: 'A monk who travels carries his pot, bowl and necessary clothes by hanging them from his shoulders over his robe and he carries an umbrella in his hand... At the season of pilgrimage to the shrines at Rājagaha, the Bodhi Tree, the Vulture's Peak, the Deer Park, the holy place where the sal trees turn white like the wings of a crane (Kusināra) and the lovely Squirrel's Feeding Place at the Bamboo Grove, traveling monks assemble in thousands in every one of these places day after day, from every quarter, and all travel in the same way mentioned above. Venerable and learned monks of Nālandā ride in sedan-chairs but never go on horseback and those of Maharaga monastery do the same. In some cases, necessary baggage is carried by other persons or taken by boys.'

In its 700 years of existence, Nālandā produced a galaxy of brilliant scholars, teachers and philosophers. Tibetan tradition connects Nāgārjuna, Aryadeva and several other early Mahayana thinkers with Nālandā, but as we have already seen, all the evidence indicates that no monastery existed during the period in which they flourished. However, Dinnāga, who wrote nearly a hundred works on logic, Dharmakirti, sometimes called the Kant of India, Chandragomi, playwright, poet and logician and the Sri Lankan Mañjusrimitra, an early teacher of Dzogchen, all studied at Nālandā. Other luminaries were the great philosopher Dharmapāla, who studied for seven years before accepting an invitation to go to Sumatra, and Thonmi Sambhota, who is credited with having developed the Tibetan script. Santarakshita, Padmasambhava and Kamalasīla, who all played such an important part in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, had likewise studied at Nālandā. Another famous student of the university, Santideva, had, interestingly enough, a reputation for laziness. Despite this, in his most famous work, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, he prays that Indian monasteries, including no doubt his own alma mater, should always flourish: 'May the monasteries remain well established, humming with teaching and the chanting of lessons; may the unity of the Sangha be perennial and its work be successfully undertaken.'

Unfortunately, it was not to be so. While great monastic universities like Nālandā contributed to Buddhism's glory, they also inadvertently contributed to its decline. Nālandā grew fabulously wealthy and the monks began to study more to earn lucrative positions in court than to

understand and practice the Buddha's teachings. Also, congregated in huge monasteries, dependent upon royal patronage, the monks gradually lost touch with the people. Worst of all, the liberal curriculums in the universities came to include more and more Brahminical ritual and magic which led to a new type of Buddhism that became increasingly indistinguishable from Hinduism. After the second battle of Tarain in 1192 CE, the whole of India lay at the mercy of the iconoclastic armies of Islam, and Buddhism, already weakened by the revival of Brahminism and its own internal corruption, was about to be given a terrible and violent *coup de grace*.

In 1193 CE, the Turkish Muslim raider Muhammad Bakhtiyar invaded the Middle Land, burning every temple and killing every monk he encountered. In his *Tabakat-i Nasiri*, the Muslim historian Minhaju-s Siraj describes Bakhtiyar's destruction of a great Buddhist monastery, Uddandapura, which he mistook for a walled town, a description which gives some idea what nearby Nālandā's end might have been like: 'Muhammad Bakhtiyar, with great vigor and audacity, rushed in at the gate of the fort and gained possession of the place. Great plunder fell into the hands of the victors. Most of the inhabitants of the place were Brahmins with shaven heads (Buddhist monks). They were put to death. Large numbers of books were found and when the Muhammadans saw them, they called for some persons to explain their contents, but all of the men had been killed. It was discovered that the whole fort and city was a place of study.'[4]

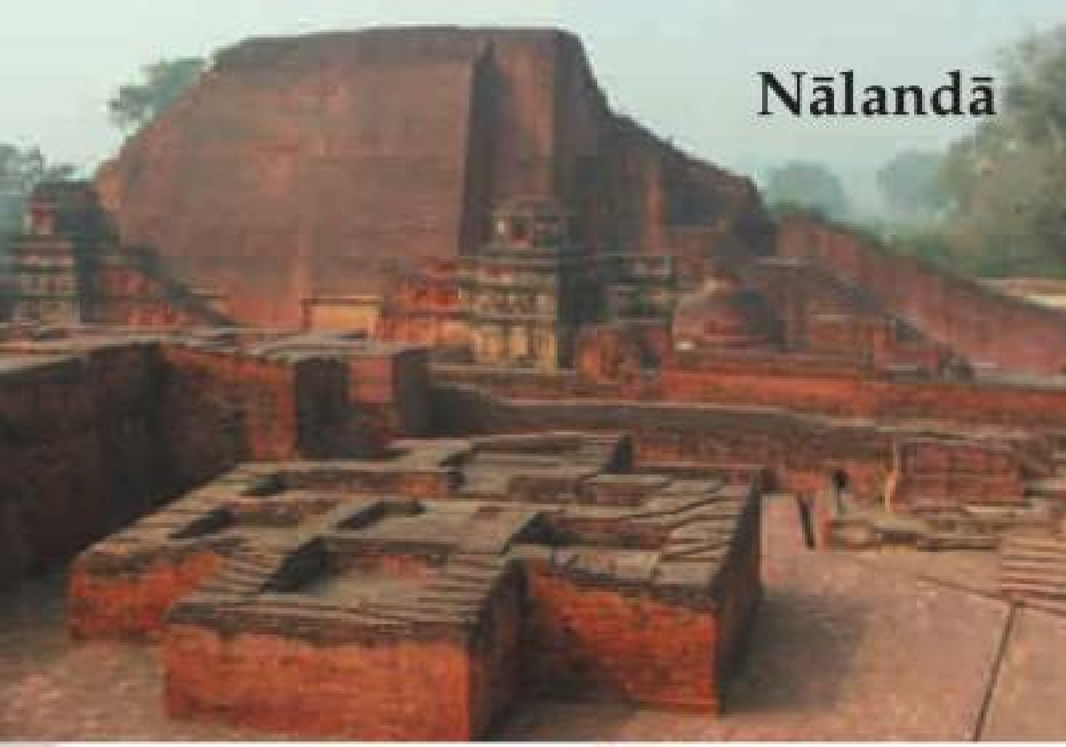
From Dharmasvāmin's account we know that Nālandā was attacked at least once, after which some monks returned to try to continue a vestige of their routine of study, meditation and devotion. After another raid, the last monks crept silently away to eventually find refuge in Burma, Nepal and Tibet, and the halls of Nālandā fell into silence.

What to See

Monastery 1

The ruins of Nālandā are entered through the passage between Monasteries 1 and 4. A copper plate inscription found in the verandah of Monastery 1 suggests that it was a college for students coming from Java and Sumatra. The inscription, issued by King Devapāladeva (815–54 CE) in the 39th year of his reign, mentions that King Balaputradeva of Suvarnadvīpa (Java and Sumatra) had built a college at Nālandā and then, through his ambassador, had requested King Devapāladeva to grant the revenue of several villages for the use of the college. The money was to be used 'for offerings, oblations, shelter, garments, alms, beds, requisites for the sick like medicine... for writing Dhamma books and for the upkeep and repair of the monastery when damaged.' King Devapāladeva agreed

Nālandā













Nālandā

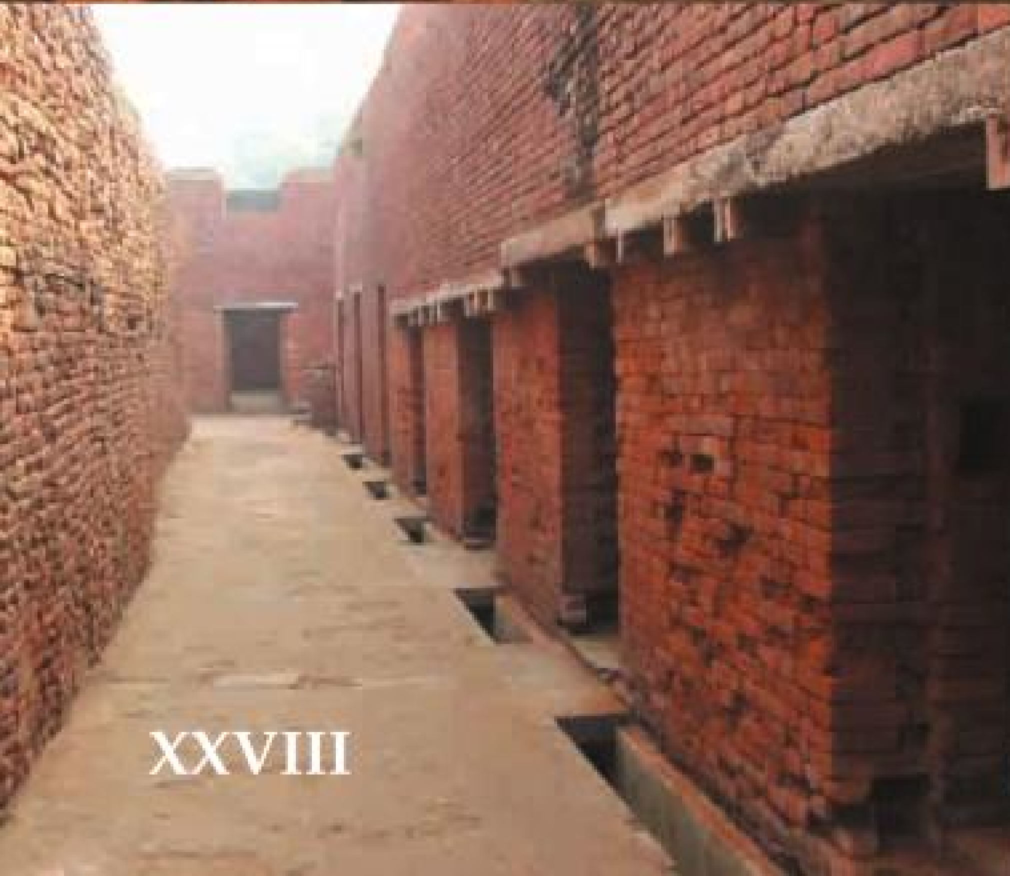














to the request and the inscription ends by mentioning that he built a monastery at Nālandā for 'the assembly of monks of various good qualities,' and granted five villages for its support.

Monastery 1 has been built on the same site at least nine times and what the pilgrim sees now are parts of at least three or four structures superimposed upon each other. The monastery is entered through an impressive portico, the roof of which was supported by pillars and the stone bases of which can still be seen. The monastery consists of monks' cells, some with beds, arranged around a large courtyard. The stairs in the southwest corner indicate that the building was originally at least two stories high, while the thickness of the walls suggest that it may well have been higher. At the eastern end of the monastery there is a shrine which originally contained a large statue of the Buddha, of which only parts of its crossed legs and drapery survive. The platform with the stone pillars in front of the shrine was probably where teachers sat when they read their lectures to the students assembled in the courtyard.

Temple Site 3

This temple has been rebuilt, modified or renovated at least seven times over the centuries and this together with the numerous votive stupas clustered around it indicates that it was the most sacred shrine at Nālandā. There is little doubt that the original structure here was the stupa marking Sāriputta's birthplace. The first three stages of this temple are covered by the later additions and cannot be seen. The temple as it appeared in later centuries consisted of a huge central tower with smaller towers at its four corners, of which three survive, not unlike the Mahābodhi Temple at Bodh Gayā. These smaller towers have niches containing stucco figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dating from the Gupta period. Sadly, in recent years, the heads or faces of some of these figures have been broken off to be sold in the illegal art market. A large staircase leads to the top of the temple where there is a shrine, which must have contained a statue. The small stupas on the east side of the temple are of particular interest. Several of these stupas have small rooms attached to them making it possible to meditate inside them. Some of the other stupas were found to be built of bricks inscribed with sacred texts and were probably built in honor of the many esteemed scholars and teachers who resided in Nālandā throughout the centuries. From the top of Temple Site 3, the pilgrim can get a fine view of the whole complex of Nālandā.

Temple Site 12

This temple was the largest structure at Nālandā, being approximately 52 meters by 50 meters. Like Temple Site 3, it consisted of a central tower with four smaller ones at each of the corners, each containing a shrine which would have originally housed a statue. At the top of the stairs, on

the left, are two carved pillars. Perhaps Huien Tsiang was referring to this temple when he wrote: 'The richly adorned towers and the fairylike turrets, like pointed hill-tops, are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the morning mist and the upper rooms tower above the clouds. From the windows one can see the winds and the clouds, and above the soaring eaves the conjunctions of the sun and moon may be observed.' On both the north and south of Temple 12 are two smaller shrines, each containing the remains of statues of the Buddha in the earth touching gesture.

Monastery 4 to 11

Monasteries 1 and 4 to 11 were the colleges where the students of Nālandā both lived and studied, and they differ from each other only slightly. Several of these monasteries have wells in their courtyards and drains, probably used as toilets, in their northeast corners. An interesting feature of Monastery 9 is the six ovens in the courtyard. Although it is hard to picture it now, each of these monasteries was originally beautifully painted and decorated and at least four stories high. Huien Tsiang described the monks' quarters as they existed at his time thus: 'All the outside courts in which are the monks' cells are of four stories. The stories have dragon-projections and colored eaves, the pearl-red pillars, carved and ornamental, the richly adorned balustrades and the roofs covered with tiles that reflect the light in a thousand shades–these things add to the beauty of the scene.'

Black Buddha Statue

Just in front of Monastery 11 is a small shrine containing a large statue of the Buddha carved out of black stone. The statue dates from the Pāla period and is now worshipped by local people as a Hindu god.

Temple Site 2

Directly behind Monasteries 7 and 8 is a small but very interesting temple. All around the outer walls of this temple are 211 carved stone panels. It is well worthwhile walking slowly around it and examining these panels. The pilgrim will see figures playing musical instruments, loving couples, Hindu gods, peacocks and geese, geometrical patterns and scenes from daily life. Another interesting feature of this temple can be seen by going to the main staircase. It will be noticed that the stones in this temple have been held together with iron clamps.

Archaeological Museum

The museum contains a fine collection of stone and metal statues found in and around Nālandā, most of which date from the Pāla period. One of the finest pieces is a large, almost free standing statue of either

Avalokitesvara or Samantabhadra carved out of black stone. The left hand holds a beautiful lotus while the right hand, palm outward, bestows blessings. On an elongated halo behind the Bodhisattva's head are three Buddhas, a fourth one being nestled on the Bodhisattva's head. Two female devotees stand at the figure's feet. The relaxed posture and the overall simplicity of this statue indicates that it dates from the late Gupta period. Unfortunately, past efforts to repair the nose detract from the beautiful expression on the Bodhisattva's face. Another interesting item in the museum is the sandal made out of ivory. The museum is adjacent to the ruins and is open every day from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

How to Get There

Nālandā is 90 kilometers southeast of Patna and 11 kilometers north of Rājagaha, some two kilometers off the main road.

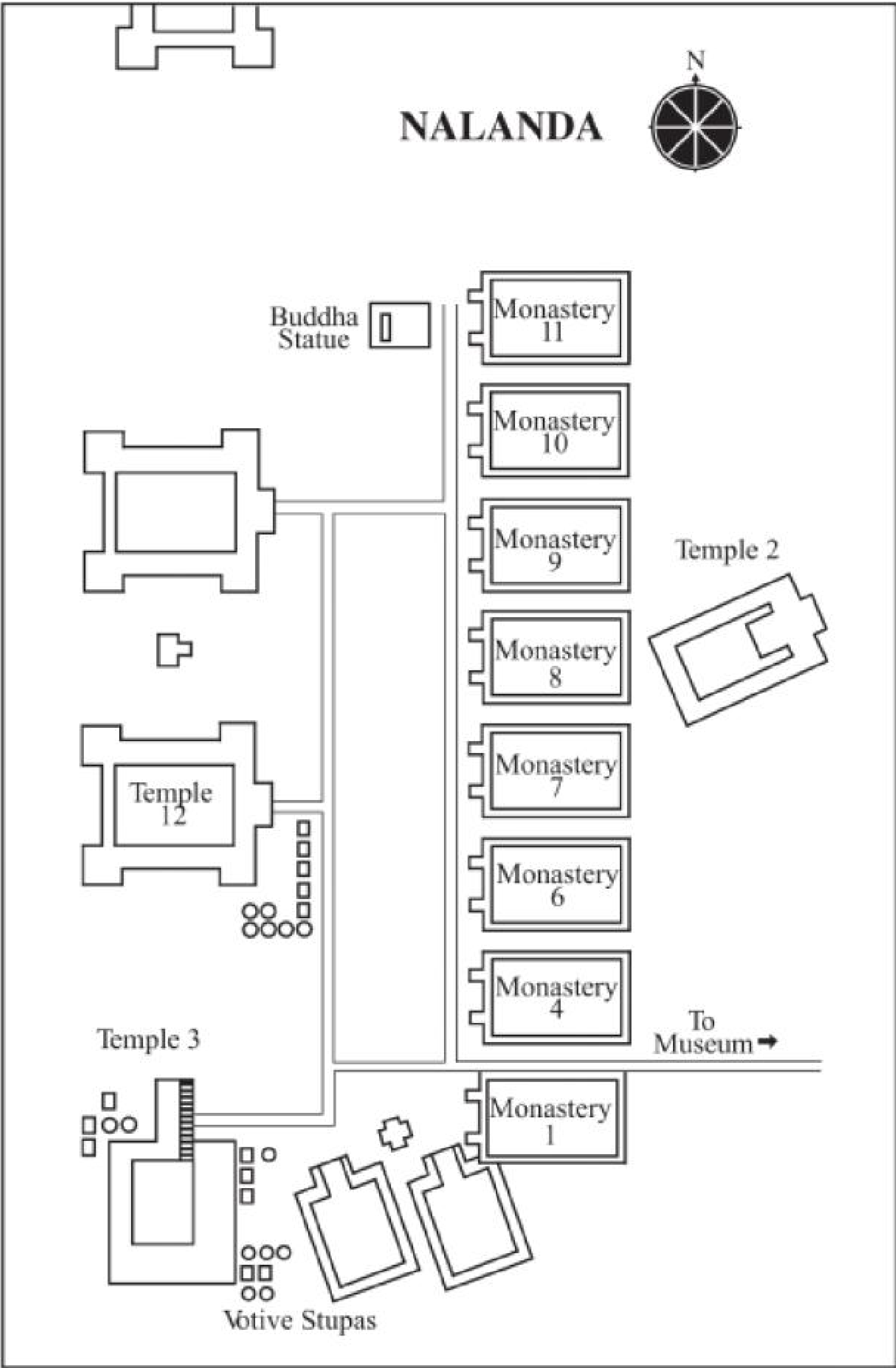
Around Nālandā

The Buddha at Jagdispur

A large and very interesting statue of the Buddha can be seen in the village of Jagdispur about 3 kilometers south-west of the ruins at Nālandā. The statue, now the main image in a small Hindu temple, shows the Buddha surrounded by the armies of Māra who are trying to break his resolve by throwing rocks and threatening him with weapons. The Buddha has a slightly amused expression on his face and his right hand is in the earth touching gesture. Around the Buddha are depicted seven important events in his life. Starting from the bottom right, they are: monkeys offering honey, the First Sermon, the descent from the Tusita heaven, the final Nirvana, the taming of the elephant Nālagiri, the miracle at Sāvatthī and the birth of the Buddha. Unfortunately, the details of this fine statue are somewhat obscured by layers of dirt and dust on its surface.

How to Get There

To get to Jagdispur, take the road past the Nava Nālandā Institute. From the village, proceed for the last kilometer on foot. The temple where the statue is enshrined is called Rukmani Astan.


NALANDA
N
Buddha Statue
Monastery 11
Monastery 10
Monastery 9
Temple 2
Monastery 8
Monastery 7
Temple 12
Monastery 6
Monastery 4
To Museum
Temple 3
Monastery 1
Votive Stupas

PATNA

Ānanda, no matter how far the Ariya's realm extends, no matter how far its trade expands or it scatters, its progeny, Pātaliputta will be the chief city. But Pātaliputta will face three dangers: danger from fire, from floods and from internal dissensions. [1]

Pātaligāma was a small town on the bank of the Ganges which formed the border between Magadha and Vajjī, and seems to have been the main crossing place between the two countries. The village was named after the Pātali, the beautiful white trumpet flower (*Stereospermum chelonoides*). The Buddha stayed briefly in the town during the last year of his life and was asked by the citizens to consecrate their new assembly hall by being the first person to reside in it. Evidently the Buddha had many disciples in Pātaligāma because in the Gothamukha Sutta we are told that the Brahman Gothamukha 'from his regular supply of alms and from subsequent supplies of alms had an assembly hall built for the Sangha at Pātaligāma. At the present time it is called Gothamukhi.'[2] The most popular residence for Buddhist monks visiting or staying in the town was Kukkutārāma, the Cock's Park. Ānanda delivered six discourses there to Bhadda.[3] Just before leaving Pātaligāma, the Buddha predicted that the town would grow into a great city and true to this prediction, within a hundred years of the Buddha's Nirvana the town had become the capital of Magadha and had changed its name from Pātaligāma, Pātali village, to Pātaliputta, Pātali city. The modern city of Patna now stands on the site.

As the city's fortunes changed, those of Buddhism changed too. The Kukkutārāma grew from a sylvan park into a large monastic establishment which was the site of the Third Buddhist Council, convened by King Asoka in about 253 BCE. Interestingly enough, we have a description of ancient Patna at around this time, not from Indian but from Greek sources. King Asoka's grandfather, Chandragupta, had defeated Seleukos Nikator, one of the successors of Alexander the Great, after which the latter sent an ambassador to the Mauryan court at Patna. The ambassador, Megasthenes, later wrote a book in which he gave the West its first eyewitness account of India. According to Megasthenes, Pātaliputta stretched along the southern bank of the Ganges, its walls being 15 kilometers long, 2.5 kilometers wide and surrounded by a moat 200 meters wide and 15 meters deep. The walls, all made of wood, had 64 gates and 570 towers.

In 1915–16, excavations at Bulandi Bagh, north of Patna railway station, brought to light parts of these wooden walls in an extraordinary state of preservation. The walls, 4.5 meters thick, were made of heavy upright

logs sunk about 1.5 meters below the original ground level and held together with heavy iron nails. Eventually 215 meters of the wall was exposed before excavation was stopped, the archaeologists assuming that it could have gone on for many kilometers.

When Fa Hien visited Patna, he saw the ruins of King Asoka's palace which, even in its ruined state, was so huge that legends had grown up that it had been built by superhuman forces. 'The royal palace and halls in the midst of the city, which exists now as of old, were all made by spirits which he had employed, and which piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture-work, in a way which no human hands of this world could accomplish.' He also saw a stupa built by Asoka, as well as two monasteries containing about seven hundred monks, all of whom had a reputation for good discipline and scholarship. Fa Hien himself spent three years in Patna perfecting his Sanskrit and copying out sacred texts.

To get to Patna from the north, or to head north from the city, it was necessary to cross the Ganges, which even today is very wide at this place. When the Buddha departed from Patna on his last journey, a large crowd came to see him off and in his honor it was decided to name the place where he crossed Gotama's Ford (*Gotamatittha*). The place retained that name for many centuries but cannot be identified today. Later Sanskrit literature tells us that a bridge of boats spanned the river at Patna. The modern pilgrim can cross the river by the new Mahatma Gandhi Bridge.

What to See

Kumrahar

Almost nothing of ancient Pātaliputta can be seen today; some of it must have been washed away by the Ganges and what was not may still lie buried under the present city. However, at Kumrahar, the remains of a huge pillared hall, very probably a part of King Asoka's palace, have been exposed. Excavations conducted here in 1912–13 revealed brick structures dating from the Gupta period, directly below which was a thick layer of ash which formed vertical tubes in places. Below this layer of ash was a layer of silt between 2.4 and 2.7 meters thick. This is a remarkable verification of the Buddha's prediction that after Pātaliputta had become a great city it would be prey to flood and fire. Towards the bottom of the silt layer and directly below the vertical tubes of ash were found fragments of polished pillars of the Mauryan type. The pillars, 4.3 meters from each other, were in eight rows, 72 pillars altogether. Only two pillars of any length were eventually found. Spooner, who did the excavation, conjectured that the pillars, perhaps originally 12 meters high, supported a wooden roof, and that at some time silt from a great flood left only about half the length of the pillars exposed. Later, a great conflagration destroyed the roof and cracked the upper ends of the pillars, which eventually sank into the soft

earth dragging ash and stone fragments with them as they went.

Today the remains of the pillared hall lie in the bottom of a large rectangular depression surrounded by a shady and well-maintained garden. Unfortunately, because of poor maintenance, the depression is full of water all-year round and only one pillar can be seen above the surface. However, at the edge of the site a single pillar is on display. It must have fallen over before the flood that inundated the hall occurred, as it was found lying in a horizontal position, which also must have prevented its sinking into the earth. The pillar is 4.34 meters long with the entire shaft smooth and polished. The base of the pillar is smooth but not polished, and bears a number of interesting symbols thought to be mason's marks. Several of these symbols are identical with those that occur in Persian monuments of an early date, strong evidence that Persian craftsmen were employed by the Mauryan court. The pilgrim will notice about one and a half meters from the base of the pillar four square bosses projecting slightly from the surface. It is likely that these bosses are all that is left of rings used to hold ropes during the transport of the pillar, and which were later chipped off.

Near the remains of the pillared hall is a small museum displaying some of the terracottas found at Kumrahar and also some wooden planks found during the excavation. Beyond the museum are the remains of a monastery dating from the Gupta period and named, according to a sealing found at the site, Arogya Monastery. The archaeological park at Kumrahar is about 7 kilometers from Patna Junction railway station and is open from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM every day except Monday.

Patna Museum

The Patna Museum contains a fine collection of Buddhist sculptures and despite its rather shabby appearance and poor lighting, is well worth a visit. The most famous piece in the museum is the statue of a fly-whisk bearer dating from the Mauryan period. This figure was probably one of a pair that may well have stood at the entrance of a palace. The statue is life-size, realistically carved and highly polished. The anklets and bangles on the arm are large and chunky, not unlike those still worn by Indian women. The right hand holds a cauri, a ceremonial fly-whisk. In ancient India, to be accompanied by two cauri carriers was a sign of power and status.

A statue of Avalokitesvara and another of Maitreya which were found placed on either side of a Buddha statue (also in the museum, Acc. No. 1752), are particularly beautiful. Both the statues are carved out of gray granite, are seated in the one-leg-folded posture (*ardhaparyanka*), and date from the 11th century. The faces perfectly express the ideal that these two bodhisattvas embody: active and involved compassion. The statues have their right hands in the gesture imparting fearlessness, they wear jewelry on their arms, wrists and around their necks, and they have

locks of hair lightly draped on their shoulders. Maitreya, distinguished by the stupa nestled in his headdress, holds a *nāgakesara* flower while Avalokitesvara, with a Buddha in his headdress, holds a large blooming lotus. These two bodhisattvas and their accompanying Buddha were found at Vishnupur near Kurkihar.

The gallery on the second floor of the museum contains a large collection of *thankas* that the famous Indian Buddhist monk Rāhula Sanskrityāyana acquired during his travels in Tibet during the 1930s. Sadly, the *thankas* have not fared well in the heat and humidity and inept attempts at restoration have ruined many. Another second story gallery contains most of the famous bronzes discovered at Kurkihar in 1930.

Another object of particular interest to Buddhists is to be found in the terracotta gallery, also on the second floor. It is a round terracotta plaque called the Kumrahar Plaque depicting what seems to be the Mahābodhi Temple at Bodh Gayā. This interesting plaque, found at Kumrahar, gives the pilgrim a good idea of what the great temple might have looked like shortly after it was built. Some things clearly recognizable on the plaque can still be seen on the modern temple, the main inward sloping spire, the railing around the temple, and so on. But the plaque also makes it clear that the temple has undergone major changes. The arched chamber is now completely different, and the four corner spires have been added. The museum also contains Buddhist sculptures from Nālandā, Gandhāra, Orissa and Nagapattinam in South India, and the Vesālī Buddha relics, which can now be seen for an extra hundred rupees in a special room. The Patna Museum is in Buddha Marg, which runs off Dak Bunglow Rd near the city center, and is open from 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM and closed on Mondays and public holidays.

How to Get There

Patna is connected to Gayā and Vārānasi by train and can also be reached from Rājgir by bus.

Around Patna

Hajipur

In ancient times after crossing the Ganges at Patna the first town that the traveler came to on the other side was Ukkacela, now called Hajipur. The modern town is further from the Ganges than in ancient times due to the river's constantly changing course. Buddhaghosa tells us a rather improbable story about how this place got its name. According to him, one night during the town's construction, thousands of fish were washed ashore. The villages made torches (*ukka*) out of rags (*cela*), dipped them in oil and by their light collected the fish. The Buddha stayed in or passed through Ukkacela on several occasions. During one of his visits there he taught the Cūlagopālaka Sutta in which, appropriately, the









Scenery







difficulties in driving cattle across the Ganges is used as a simile.[4] Once while Sāriputta was visiting the town, he had an interesting discussion about Nirvana with the wanderer Samandaka.[5] Shortly after the deaths of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, the Buddha gave a talk at Ukkacela in which he expressed the deep respect he had for his two chief disciples and also his sense of loss at their passing. 'Truly monks, this assembly seems empty now that Sāriputta and Moggallāna have passed away.'[6]

It is strange that the Tipitaka tells us nothing about the last days and passing away of Ānanda, the Buddha's most beloved disciple. However, later tradition says that he died near Ukkacela. Both Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang saw a stupa in the town enshrining half his remains and another one on the opposite bank of the river enshrining the other half. This is the story they heard concerning these two monuments. When Ānanda realized that his life was drawing to a close, he set off from Magadha heading north. Hearing of this, King Ajātasattu accompanied by a contingent of soldiers went after him with the intention of pleading with him to stay in Magadha. When they finally caught up with the gentle saint, he was already in a boat crossing the Ganges. Meanwhile, the people of Vajjī had heard that Ānanda was coming to their territory so they flocked to the bank of the river to welcome him. By the time Ānanda had reached the middle of the river the assemblies on both sides of the river were imploring him to come to their side. So as not to disappoint either party and to avoid the possibility of conflict, he raised himself into the air and disappeared into a mass of flames.[7] Half the ashes fell on one side of the river, half on the other and thus the two stupas came to be built. Although legendary in parts this story also probably embodies some historical fact as well—that Ānanda died near the border of Magadha and Vajjī and that there was some arrangement between the two countries to share his remains. Further, it would be quite in keeping with what we know of Ānanda's personality that he would go out of his way to oblige and not be a source of contention amongst others.

The stupa built on the south bank of the Ganges has long ago disappeared but the other one has recently been identified. Today Ānanda's stupa is a large grassy mound rising from the surrounding market gardens. The K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute of Patna recently conducted excavations in the area and found evidence of the site having been inhabited from 1000 BCE onward. Unfortunately the stupa itself cannot be excavated because of the Hindu temple on its top.

How to Get There

To get to Ānanda's stupa take the road west from the center of Hajipur to Ramchaura district of the town and ask for the Ramchaura Temple. Hajipur itself is about 10 kilometers from Patna across the Ganges.

CAMPĀ

The brahmins and householders of Campā left the city in great crowds, in large numbers and went to Gaggara's Lotus Lake.[1]

On the eastern edge of the Middle Land was the kingdom of Anga. Once independent, this kingdom was later incorporated into Magadha and in the Tipitaka is often referred to as Anga-Magadha. Campā, the capital of the kingdom, was on the southern bank of the Ganges and was one of the river's main ports and trading centers. The *Jātakas* describe Campā as being surrounded by strong walls with gates and watch towers, a fact recently confirmed by archaeologists.[2] According to Buddhaghosa the city got its name from the large number of Campaka trees (*Michelia champaca*) which grew in the vicinity. The flowers of this tree are famous for their strong sweet fragrance. The Buddha visited Campā at least once, probably several times and he taught the Sonadanda Sutta, the Karandava Sutta and the Kandaraka Sutta while there.[3] It is in this last discourse that Pessa the elephant trainer made his poignant but astute comments to the Buddha about human nature. 'Humans are a tangle while animals are open. I can drive an elephant undergoing training and in the time it takes to make a trip to and from Campā, that elephant will display every kind of deception, duplicity, crookedness and fraud. But our servants, messengers and employees, they say one thing, do another and think something else.' Several important rules in the Vinaya were drawn up while the Buddha was at Campā and Sāriputta also taught the Dasuttara Sutta during one of his stays in the city.[4]

The later history of Campā is almost completely unknown as few literary records concerning it have survived and little archaeological work has been done there. Subharangī, the mother of King Asoka, is said to have been born in the city. In about the 3rd century CE merchants and monks from Campā founded a colony in what is now southern Vietnam and named it after their hometown. For several hundred years this colony was the main center for the spread of Indian culture, particularly Buddhism, in South-east Asia.

Fa Hien visited Campā and wrote of it, 'In the place where the Buddha once dwelt and where he walked up and down... in all these places stupas have been built and monks live there.' The Chinese pilgrim took a ship from Campā to Tamralipti at the mouth of the Ganges, confirming once again the city's importance as a riverine port. Huien Tsiang left a few more details about the place. 'This country is about 4000 li in circuit. The capital is backed to the north by the river Ganges and is about 40 li round. The soil is level and fertile, it is regularly cultivated and productive, the temperature is mild and warm, the manner

of the people is simple and honest. There are several tens of monasteries, mostly in ruin, with about 200 monks. They follow the teaching of the Little Vehicle... The walls of the capital are built of bricks and are several tens of feet high. The foundations of the walls are raised on lofty embankments so that by their high escarpment they can defy the attack of enemies.' Between the 9th and 12th centuries Campā became an important center of Tantric Buddhism. Abhayadatta, who wrote the biographies of the 84 siddhas, was a native of the city as were several of his subjects.

Campā's name has survived virtually unchanged throughout the centuries, the village on the ancient site now being known as Champanagar. The whole area forms a square plateau of about 50 hectares and rises some 14 meters above the ground level. This is surrounded by a moat 60 meters wide. Archaeological excavations were done here in the late 1960's and early 70's but only parts of the city walls and a few minor antiquities were found. Amongst these antiquities were an unusual ivory figurine with movable limbs and several toy carts made out of tortoise shell. The Ganges used to flow close to Campā but at the beginning of the 20th century it shifted to its present course about a kilometer north of the modern village. Earlier in the last century there were many Buddhist statues on the southern side of the Manaskamananatha Temple but these have all disappeared.

What to See

Gaggarā's Lotus Lake

In ancient India it was quite common for princes or merchant guilds to pay for the excavation of large tanks or lakes as an act of philanthropy. People used such lakes for drinking, washing and for irrigating their crops during the summer, much as they still do. The great lake at Campā which had been named after its builder, Queen Gaggarā, was famous for the beautiful lotuses that grew in it, and because a grove of campaka trees on its bank was the Buddha's favorite resort while in Campā. When the monk and former poet Vangisa came to the lake, he was immediately able to identify the Buddha, even amongst the crowd of thousands, by his radiant and calm demeanor.[5] The Vinaya mentions that a group of monks, on hearing that the Buddha was staying at the lake, traveled all the way from Kāsī to meet him, a distance of over 300 kilometers.[6] This would indicate that the Buddha sometimes stayed at Gaggarā's Lotus Lake for several months at a time. According to the *Buddhavamsa*, the Buddha's bathing cloth was preserved in one of Campā's monasteries, suggesting that there was a tradition of him having bathed in the lake.[7] Today Gaggarā's Lotus Lake is a large body of water, very much silted up, and now called Sarovana. It is located at the edge of Champanagar near the main Jain temple. Early in the 20th century, while attempting to

clear mud from the lake, workers found several fine Buddha statues, but the whereabouts of these is now unknown. To get there through the narrow streets and lanes, ask for Sarovana Talarb.

How to Get There

To get to Campā take the main road following the Ganges or the train from Patna east to Bhagalpur, a total distance of about 150 kilometers. Alternatively, one can take the road from Nawada to Bhagalpur via Jamui, Tarapur and Sultanganj. Champanagar, the modern Campā, is about four kilometers west of Bhagalpur. The condition of both roads to Bhagalpur ranges from passable to very bad. Bhagalpur district is a particularly lawless and it is unsafe to be driving after dusk.

Around Campā

Jahangira

By whatever road the pilgrim takes to Campā, it will be necessary to pass through Sultanganj, which was once an important centre of Buddhism. Huien Tsiang spent a year here studying with two famous scholar monks, Tathāgatagupta and Kshāntisimha. In the 19th century there were still ruins of Buddhist monasteries and temples in and around the town, particularly at Karnagdh, but in 1864 these were all destroyed to provide building material for the new railway. While one monastery was being demolished, a standing bronze Buddha was uncovered which was still fixed to its pedestal. This, the largest Gupta period metal statue ever found, is now displayed in the Birmingham Museum in England.

In the middle of the Ganges at Sultanganj is a temple called Jahangira built on and around a cluster of huge boulders. The rocks around the temple are covered with hundreds of exceptionally fine Gupta period sculptures. Most of these are of Hindu gods and heroes but several are Buddhist. The largest of these is a standing Buddha about 1.5 meters high, almost identical to the statues from Sārnāth, with its right hand in the gesture bestowing blessings and a halo behind its head. To the left of the image is a small kneeling figure, probably the person who paid for it to be carved, and on its right is a niche with a smaller Buddha image in it. This and the Hindu sculptures of Jahangira are some of the best Gupta art still to be seen in north India outside a museum. Within sight of Jahangira is a hill called Murli Paha facing the river and with a mosque on its summit. Many of the rocks around this hill also have sculptures carved into them. Regular boats go to Jahangira from the main ghat at Sultanganj.

Vikramasīla

From about the 8th or 9th centuries onward a new type of Buddhism began to emerge, which became the last of the three vehicles of Indian

Buddhism: the Tantrayana or as it was sometimes called, the Vajrayana. In the beginning this new interpretation met with disapproval from the more traditional monks and nuns, so King Dharmapāla (775–812) founded a monastery named Vikramasīla especially for its study. One Tibetan source gives us this description of the monastery. 'Sri Vikramasīla was built on the bank of the Ganges in the north of Magadha on the top of a hill. At its center was built a temple housing a life-size copy of the Mahābodhi Image. Around this were fifty three small temples for the study of the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* and another fifty four ordinary ones, all being surrounded by a wall. Thus the number of temples was a hundred and eight. He (Dharmapāla) also provided requisites for one hundred and eight pundits.' The perimeter wall apparently had six gates and at the entrance of the main temple was were two statues, one of Nāgārjuna and another of Atisa. In another account we read that as a delegation from Tibet approached the great monastery they were 'greatly thrilled to have the first distant glimpse of its golden spire a-shining in the sun.'

What the monastic universities of Bodh Gayā was to early Buddhism and Nālandā was to Mahayana, Vikramasīla was to Tantrayana. Some of the monastery's 'gate keeper scholars' were amongst the greatest names of this twilight period of Indian Buddhism. They included Santipa, Jetari, Ratnavajra, Jnānasrimitra and Naropa whose writings are still studied in Tibet. Vikramasīla's greatest son however was Atisa (982–1054). Apart from being a brilliant scholar and prolific writer, he also developed a new curriculum for the monastery, built more rooms for its monks and invited some of the best pundits of the time to come and teach there. Atisa spent the last years of his life in Tibet, where he helped to revive Buddhism and where his memory is still revered. At its height between the 8th and 10th centuries Vikramasīla attracted teachers and students from all over northern India, Kashmir, Java, Nepal, and Tibet. One of its most celebrated scholars was Lankajayabhadra, a Sri Lankan famous for his expositions of the *Guyhasamaja Tantra*. During the time of King Rāmapāla at the beginning of the 10th century there is said to have been a hundred and sixty teachers and a thousand students in the monastery. Some Tantric practitioners had a reputation for unconventional behavior but such things were not tolerated at Vikramasīla. We read of a monk named Maitripāla who was expelled for bringing wine into the monastery. As was the custom, he was ejected over the wall rather than being able to leave through the main gate.

At the beginning of the 13th century, Vikramasīla met the same fate as all Buddhist centers in India. A Tibetan legend says that the monk Prājñarakshita prayed to a Tantric deity and the Muslim soldiers about to attack the monastery were scattered by a great rainstorm. The reality was rather different. As the invading armies' pushed further east the king hastily fortified several of the larger monasteries including Vikramasīla and stationed soldiers in them. But it did no good. In about

1205 Vikramasīla was sacked, its inmates were killed or driven away and its foundation stone was flung into the Ganges. The monastery's last abbot, Sākyasribhadra, spent his final years in Tibet and Kashmir.

In 1901 Nundalal De suggested that Vikramasīla might be near the village of Patharaghat where there were several huge mounds and fragments of Buddhist statuary. Patharaghat itself is a hill with its rocky west side washed by the Ganges and its top offering a sweeping view over the river. On arriving the pilgrim will notice a series of caverns dug out the side of a rocky water-filled depression. Local legend says these mysterious caverns are the result of mining a type of clay in ancient times. At the foot of the nearby Banyan tree is a beautiful statue of Tārā, some stone stupas and other pieces of sculpture. A little further along on the side of the hill is the Bodhesvranath Temple. Just inside the main gate are statues of the Buddha, Avalokitesvara and Tārā. The first shrine has another statue of Tārā at its entrance. Besides this shrine is a cave with two chambers cut out of the side of the hill and outside the back gate is a similar one. Beyond the temple is another cave, large, finely cut and with a paneled ceiling. Patharaghat is a very picturesque place and the many caves and Buddhist antiquities in the area suggest that it used to be a popular meditation retreat with monks from Vikramasīla. Huien Tsiang came here and wrote of it; 'By cutting the rock, caves have been made, by leading the streams through each there is a continuous stream of water. There are wonderful trees and flowering woods, the large rocks and dangerous precipices are the resort of men of wisdom and virtue. Those who go to see the place are reluctant to return'. The modern pilgrim will certainly agree with him.

Taking the road about three kilometers south-east of Patharaghat the pilgrim will come to a collection of ruins now identified as Vikramasīla. However, it should be pointed out that excavations done here in the late 1960's failed to find a single inscription actually mentioning the name Vikramasīla and also that the ruins do not correspond very well with the ancient descriptions of the great university. A broad processional path leads up to the monastery's main entrance. The remains of the huge stone pillars that once supported the roof of the gate house can be seen on the right and left. One of these pillars is nearly 80 centimeters square. Passing through the main gate the pilgrim now enters a vast quadrangle 330 meters square and surrounded by two hundred and eight monk's cells. The thickness of the walls suggest that there may have been two or even three stories of cells. Archaeologists discovered up to 15 centimeters of ash in some of these cells, proof of the monastery's fiery end. In the middle of the quadrangle is the immense main temple, built on a cross plan, rising in three terraces and with shrines at each of the four directions. The main statue in this temple was a copy of the Mahābodhi Image from Bodh Gayā. When Atisa was in Tibet, he wrote a letter to the monks at Vikramasīla asking that they

Gaggarā's Lotus Lake

Vikramasīla

Jahangira

make a painting of this statue and send it to him. Terracotta figures once decorated the sides of the terraces, but only a few of these now remain. Around the main complex are numerous other ruins awaiting excavation and a large building housing many of the statues found on the site, but this is always kept locked. Some of the other statues found here are now in the Patna Museum.

How to Get There

Patharaghat is 58 kilometers from Bhagalpur via Kahalgong (also spelled Colgong), from where it will be necessary to hire a vehicle. Go via Patharaghat as the direct road to Vikramasīla is impassable. There is no accommodation in this area, so a visit to Patharaghat and Vikramasīla should be done as a day trip from Bhagalpur.

VESĀLĪ

Now at that time Vesālī was rich, prosperous full of people, crowded with men and with food easily available. There were seven thousand seven hundred and seven halls, seven thousand seven hundred and seven gabled houses, seven thousand seven hundred and seven parks, and seven thousand seven hundred and seven lotus ponds.[1]

Vesālī was the chief city of the Licchavis, one of the eight tribes that together made up the Vajjian Confederacy, and came to be considered the capital of the confederacy. Although made up of diverse tribes, the Vajjians had a high degree of cohesion and unity. Their council would 'meet together in concord, adjourn in concord and carry out all business in concord,' and the Buddha said that, if the Sangha was able to follow this example, it would endure and prosper just as the Vajjians had done.[2] We are told that Vesālī was surrounded by three walls, each a *gavuta* in distance from the other and each with a gate with watchtowers[3]. The *Lalitavistara* describes the city as 'prosperous and proud, charming and delightful, crowded with many people, adorned with buildings of every description, storied mansions, buildings with towers and palaces, noble gateways and charming with beds of flowers in her numerous gardens and groves.'

After his stay in Rājagaha, the Buddha accepted an invitation to visit Vesālī, and it is said that King Bimbisāra had the road from Rājagaha all the way up to the Ganges smoothed to make his progress easier and that when he crossed the river into Vajjian territory he was met by an enthusiastic welcoming party. The Buddha spent the fifth rains retreat after his enlightenment in Vesālī, visiting again on several occasions and finally spending the last rains retreat before his final Nirvana on the outskirts of the city. While there, he used to stay at some of the city's many shrines—Udena Cetiya, Gotamaka Cetiya, Sattambaka Cetiya and so on, at Bhandagama, just outside the town or at the edge of the Mahāvana, the great forest that started at the outskirts of the city and extended north right up to the foothills of the Himalayas. Some of the important discourses delivered at Vesālī include the Tevijja Sutta, the Mahāli Sutta, the Tevijja Vacchagotta Sutta and the popular Ratana Sutta.[4]

One of the most celebrated incidents in the Buddha's life took place during the Buddha's last visit to Vesālī. In ancient India, prostitutes could, if they were beautiful and accomplished in music and singing, rise to a position of influence, respect and considerable wealth. Vesālī's most beautiful and talented prostitute was Ambapālī. When she heard that the Buddha was staying at her mango grove just outside the city, she drove her chariot out to meet him and 'he gladdened, uplifted, inspired

and delighted her with talk on Dhamma.' Then she invited him and his retinue to her home the next day for a meal and the Buddha accepted. Shortly afterwards, a crowd of Licchavi nobles approached Ambapālī and asked her if she would give them the honor of offering the Buddha the next day's meal. She refused, saying that she would not give up the honor for a hundred thousand coins. So the Licchavis went to see the Buddha and invited him themselves, but he told them he could not accept because he had already accepted Ambapālī's invitation. The next day, after the meal, Ambapālī offered the Buddha her mango grove, which in time grew into a famous monastery[5]. Later in life, Ambapālī became a nun and composed a poem in which she contemplated the destruction of her youthful beauty by old age. This is one of the earliest poems from India composed by a woman.[6]

After this, the Buddha retired to Beluva, which, according to the ancient commentary, was to the south of Vesālī, just outside the city gate. It was here that he told Ānanda that in teaching the Dhamma he had held nothing back, that there was no secret 'higher teaching.' It was here too that the Buddha was first attacked by the sickness that, along with old age, was to hasten his death. When the Buddha left Vesālī to proceed on his journey to the north, he turned around to take one last look at the city, perhaps to contemplate its beauty and also to briefly reminisce on the many experiences he had had there.[7] Centuries later, Huien Tsiang was shown a small stupa marking the spot where this event had taken place.

About a hundred years after the Buddha's final Nirvana, Vesālī was the scene of the Second Buddhist Council. The council was initially called to settle questions of monastic discipline, but after these issues were resolved, the Dhamma and the Vinaya were recited by the congregation. Monks from as far away as Kosambī attended the council, including Venerable Sabbakāmi, who, it was said, had shared a cell with Ānanda and was believed to be the oldest monk in the world at that time.[8]

In the first five hundred years after the Buddha's final Nirvana, Vesālī became popular with pilgrims, both for the many shrines in the city marking important events in the Buddha's career and also because of a famous relic possessed by the city—the Buddha's begging bowl. This relic was first enshrined at Keasriya and later moved to a magnificent temple in Vesālī where it was honored with elaborate ceremonies and festivals. In the 2nd century CE, King Kanishka attacked Vesālī and removed the begging bowl to his capital at Peshawar. Literary sources over the next several hundred years refer to the precious relic and Chinese pilgrims passing through northern India reported seeing it. The temple in which the begging bowl was enshrined was destroyed during the Islamic invasion, but the bowl itself survived and today it can still be seen in a small Muslim shrine at Kandahar in Afghanistan, now with a Persian inscription on its outer surface.

Both Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang visited Vesālī, though during the latter' s visit the whole city was in ruins: 'At every step, commanding sites and old foundations are seen, which the succession of seasons and lapse of years have entirely destroyed. The forests are uprooted, the shallow lakes are dried up and stinking and nothing but offensive remnants of decay can be recorded. There were several functioning monasteries, but they only had a few monks in them.' In the first half of the 13th century when Dharmasvāmin visited, the city was again inhabited, though when the Tibetan arrived the whole population was preparing to flee from the Muslims who were expected to attack at any time. Dharmasvāmin also mentions a statue of Tārā enshrined in the city which was widely believed to possess magical powers. The statue's left hand held a symbol over its heart representing the Triple Gem and its face was so beautiful that just to behold it was to be freed from all distress.

What to See

Raja Visala Ka Garh

The area around Vesālī is susceptible to flooding from the nearby Gandak River, and centuries of regular inundation have destroyed almost all traces of the ancient city. Much, no doubt, will come to light if extensive excavations are carried out in the future. As the pilgrim approaches Vesālī from the south, a huge grassy mound, now called Raja Visala Ka Garh (the House of Vesālī's King), will be observed on the left of the road. The mound forms a rectangle 481 meters long and 228 meters wide and in Cunningham's time had towers at the corners, though these have since disappeared. The mound, which is believed to be the remains of the Vajjians' great assembly hall, was later converted into a palace and finally a fortress. On the south-west corner there now is a stupa with the tomb of a Sufi saint on the top.

Kharauna Pokhar

This large rectangular tank is believed to be the Abhiseka Puskarini which was used in the coronation of Vajjian rulers. A new Japanese stupa and temple now graces the southern side of the tank.

Archaeological Museum

On the banks of the Kharauna Pokhar is the museum which contains a small collection of antiquities found in the area. Just inside the main entrance is a Buddha statue, carved out of blue-black stone, in the earth touching gesture and with one high crown on its head. The statue was originally found in a field and later enshrined in a small temple built on the top of the stupa next to the Lion Pillar. The inscription on the statue mentions that it was donated by 'Uchaba the scribe, son of Manikya.'


Vesālī
XXXIII





Another interesting piece is an upright post from a railing with a representation of the purchase of the Jetavana on it. The Archaeological Museum is open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, closed on Fridays.

The Licchavi's Stupa

A little to the north-east of the museum is the remains of a small but extremely important stupa. The Licchavis were among those who received a portion of the Buddha's ashes after his final Nirvana[9]. The stupa they built to enshrine these relics was opened by King Asoka, who removed some of the relics and broke them into smaller pieces so he could enshrine them in the many stupas he was building throughout his empire. Huien Tsiang confirms this story, adding some interesting details: 'After the Buddha's Nirvana, a former king of the country obtained a portion of the relics of his body and to honor them as highly as possible, raised this building. The records of India state: "In this stupa, there was at first a quantity of relics equal to a hob. King Asoka opened it, took away nine tenths of the whole, leaving only one tenth behind. Afterwards, there was a king of the country who wished again to open the stupa, but at the moment when he began to do so, the earth trembled, and he dared not proceed."'

The discovery and excavation of this stupa in 1958 provided striking confirmation of these stories. The original stupa was found to be made of rammed earth, proof of its very early date, and yielded a small soapstone casket containing burnt bone, one copper punch-marked coin, a small conch shell, two glass beads and a small gold plate. The stupa had been enlarged with bricks about two hundred and fifty years after its construction, and again on two later occasions. The first and second stupas showed clear signs of having been opened. All the evidence points to this being the original stupa built by the Licchavis and the relics within being those of the Buddha. Despite this exciting find, the discovery of these relics, like the discovery of those at Piprāhwa, caused hardly a ripple of interest in the Buddhist world. These relics can now be seen—for an extra payment of one hundred rupees—in a special room in the Patna Museum.

Lion Pillar

Returning to the main road and proceeding for a few kilometers, the pilgrim will come to a large stupa with a stone pillar next to it. The pillar is often attributed to King Asoka, but as it differs so much from those known to be erected by him, this attribution is probably incorrect. The shaft of the pillar is thick and squat, in contrast to the slender shafts of Asoka's pillars, and it also lacks the polish found on most Mauryan stonework. The lion on the capital, while impressive, has none of the heraldic proportions of the lions from Lauriya Nandangar, Rampurva or Sārnāth. The lion sits on a plain square pedestal, while all Asokan pillars

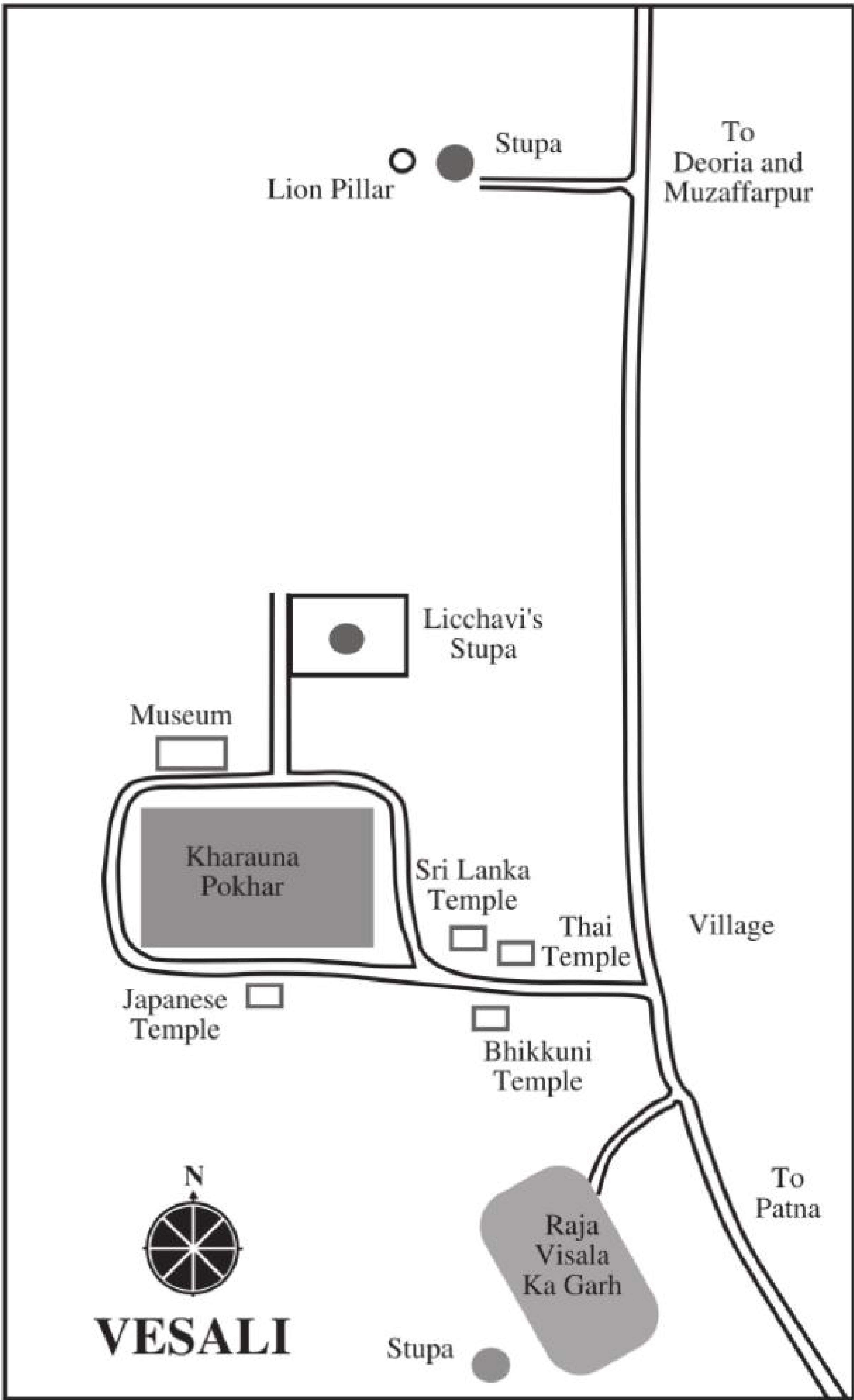
have round pedestals usually with a frieze around them. There is no inscription on the pillar, but there is a large amount of graffiti. Recent examination has shown that the total length of the pillar, from the base to the top of the capital, is 14.6 meters, though it has sunk several meters into the ground. It is possible that this pillar dates from a little before Asoka and was the prototype for his pillars. Around the pillar are numerous small stupas made of brick.

Stupa

Right next to the Lion Pillar are the ruins of a large stupa, 4.6 meters high and about 20 meters in diameter. Huien Tsiang mentions that this stupa was erected by King Asoka, and this was confirmed by excavations carried out between 1976 and 1978. The stupa was found to have been built first during the Mauryan period and rebuilt and enlarged on two other occasions. A square brick relic chamber inside contained a highly polished stone relic casket and small sheets of gold and semiprecious stones.

How to Get There

Vesālī is 40 kilometers north of Patna and can easily be reached from there by road.


Stupa
Lion Pillar
To
Deoria and
Muzaffarpur
Licchavi's
Stupa
Museum
Kharauna
Pokhar
Sri Lanka
Temple
Thai
Temple
Village
Japanese
Temple
Bhikkuni
Temple
N
To
Patna
Raja
Visala
Ka Garh
VESALI
Stupa

KESARIYA

The Kālāmas of Kesaputta heard, 'The samana Gotama, a son of the Sakyans, having gone forth from the Sakyan clan, has arrived in Kesaputta.' [1]

On the northern edge of Vajjī lived a semi-independent clan of people called the Kālāmas whose chief town was Kesaputta[2]. The town's importance was due to its close proximity to the main crossing point on the Gandak River. One of the Buddha's early teachers, Alāra Kālāma, probably came from here. It was during a visit to Kesaputta that the Buddha gave one of his most important discourses, the celebrated Kessaputtiya Sutta, popularly known as the Kālāma Sutta. Various wandering teachers would come to Kesaputta, expound their own ideas and criticize the ideas of others. As a result the Kālāmas didn't know who to believe. The Buddha advised them to rely on their own experience.

'It is good to doubt, Kālāmas. Doubt has arisen in a matter that is doubtful. Do not be led by revelation, by hearsay or by lineage. Do not be led by the sacred scriptures, by logical conjecture or by inference. Do not be led by analogies, by speculation, by probability or because you think, "He is our teacher." But when you yourself know, "These things are skillful, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise and when acted upon lead to welfare and happiness," then follow them.'[3]

According to later legend, when the Buddha left Vajjī on his last journey to Kusināra, crowds of Vajjians followed him unable to bear the thought of never seeing their beloved teacher again. Several times the Buddha asked them to return to their homes, but still they came. When he got to Kesaputta, he turned to the crowd one final time and urged them to let him continue his journey alone. Reluctantly they agreed and one by one they turned to leave. Out of compassion for them and as a memento, the Buddha gave the Vajjians his bowl, which was subsequently enshrined in Vesālī. Later, a stupa was built at Kesaputta to commemorate this incident and also to mark the place where the Kālāma Sutta had been taught. Located where the main road from Patāliputta forked to either Lumbinī or the river crossing leading to Kusināra, pilgrims heading to or from both places used to stop at Kesaputta. Both Fa Hien and Huien Tsiang came here and saw the stupa, but their descriptions of it are brief.

What to See

Stupa

Even in its ruined state Kesariya's stupa is an extremely impressive sight. Cunningham found it to be 424 meters in circumference and 51 feet high. He estimated that its dome would have originally been about 51 meters high. Concerning his further findings he wrote, 'The excavations have disclosed the walls of a small temple 10 feet square, and the head and shoulders of a colossal figure of the Buddha, with the usual crisp curly hair.' Proper excavations were started in Kesariya only in 1999 and are still not complete. The lower part of the stupa dates from the Gupta period while the upper part and dome was added during the Pāla period. The stupa rises in six huge terraces each of a different shape in a similar fashion to the Lauriya Nandangaha stupa. Around the sides of each terrace are cells containing life-size statues of the Buddha in the earth-touching gesture.

How to Get There

Kesariya is about 55 kilometers north-west of Vesālī. To get there from Vesālī get to the main Muzaffarpur–Motihari road, proceed north and turn off at Pipra. Do not take the earlier turnoff at Chakia, as the road is very bad. Kesariya is about 20 kilometers from Pipra.

KOSAMBĪ

The Buddha visited Kosambī, the capital of Vamsā, on several occasions and he also spent the 9th rains retreat after his enlightenment in the city and the tenth nearby at Parileyya. Kosambī was a prosperous city due to its strategic position on the trade route that entered and passed through the Middle Land. One of the main roads from Kosala to Magadha passed through the city, as did the main road from the Deccan.[1] We are told that Ānanda once took a boat from Magadha, probably embarking at Patna, up the river to Kosambī, indicating that the Yamuna River, which flows by the city, could have been plied by merchant craft also.[2]

The Buddha's first visit to Kosambī was in response to an invitation by three friends, the merchants Ghosita, Kukkuta and Pāvārika. They had heard of the Buddha and had gone to Sāvatthī to meet him. On hearing the Dhamma, they were so impressed that they invited him and his monks to come to Kosambī. Each of the three gifted a park for the use of the Sangha, and these parks were named after them—Ghositārāma, Kukkutārāma and Pāvārikambavana. Only the first of these has so far been identified by archaeologists. The Buddha would often stay in these places, and also at the Simsapāvana, where he once compared what he had taught with the few leaves he had picked up in his hand, and what he actually knew with the leaves on all the Simsapa trees in the grove.[3] In contrast to the other monarchs of the time, King Udena of Vamsā was never a supporter of the Buddha, and there is even evidence that he was hostile to the new teaching. Some time after the Buddha's final Nirvana, the ladies of Udena's court offered 500 robes to Ānanda but it took some time to convince the king of the merit in supporting the Sangha.[4]

It was at Kosambī that the first major crisis in the Sangha occurred. A disagreement between several monks grew into an argument involving the whole community. We are told that the monks were 'disputatious, quarrelsome and contentious, wounding each other with the weapon of the tongue.' When the Buddha tried to bring about a reconciliation, he was curtly told not to interfere. Sick of the arguments, and wishing to show his disapproval to both the monks and the lay people, he left Kosambī, saying as he did so:

'He abused me, he hit me,
He oppressed me, he robbed me.'
Those who continue to hold such thoughts
Never still their hatred.

'He abused me, he hit me,
He oppressed me, he robbed me.'
Those who do not hold such thoughts
Soon still their hatred.

Kesariya







Kosambī
XXXVI

For in this world
Hatred is never appeased by more hatred.
It is love that conquers hatred.
This is an eternal law.[5]

The Buddha went off to Bālakalonakāra where, in contrast to those at Kosambī, the monks were living 'in friendliness and harmony, like milk and water mixed, looking upon each other with the eye of affection.' When the Buddha asked one of the monks how they were able to do this, he replied: 'Concerning this, I think: "Indeed it is a gain for me, indeed it is good that I am living with such companions in the holy life." I practice bodily, verbal and mental acts of love towards them, both in public and in private. I think: "Why don't I set aside my own wishes and acquiesce to their wishes?" And then I act accordingly. Truly, we are different in body, but we are one in mind.'[6] The Buddha then went off to Parileyya, where he found the company of the wild animals and the silence of the forest a welcome reprieve from the unpleasant atmosphere at Kosambī. While at Parileyya, we are told that a monkey and an elephant looked after the Buddha, making a clearing for him in the forest and bringing him food and water.[7] Meanwhile, back at Kosambī, the lay people withdrew their support from the unruly monks, which quickly brought them to their senses. According to the Pali commentaries, all of the discourses in the *Itivuttaka* were delivered by the Buddha at Kosambī and were collected and preserved by a female servant in the royal household, the lay disciple Khujjuttarā.

When Huien Tsiang came to Vamsā, there were about three hundred Buddhist monks in the country, although ten monasteries were in ruins and Hinduism was the predominant religion. In Kosambī, he saw a large temple nearly 18 meters high containing a famous sandalwood statue which legend said had been carved by King Udena and which was believed to be the prototype of all other Buddha statues. He also saw the ruins of Ghosita's house and various places where the famous brothers Asanga and Vasabandhu had lived and composed some of their philosophical works. However, the city's golden age was over, and shortly after Huien Tsiang's visit, Kosambī was completely deserted.

Today the ramparts of Kosambī form an irregular rectangle more than 6 kilometers long with the Yamunā River on the south side. At their highest, the ramparts rise up to 15 meters. Cunningham's comments on seeing the ruins for the first time in 1861 still holds good today: 'Viewed from the outside, the ruins of Kosambī present a most striking appearance. My previous inquiries had led me to expect only a mound some 20 or 30 feet in height, covered with broken bricks. What was my surprise therefore, when still at some distance from the place on the north-east side, to behold extending for about 2 miles, a long line of lofty earthen mounds as high as most of the trees.' After his visit there

in 1862–63 Cunningham announced that the village of Kosam and the huge mound around it could be identified with the site of the ancient city of Kosambī, although the historian Vincent Smith, in his usual tiresome manner, cast doubts on this claim. Consequently, uncertainty prevailed until 1922 when D.R. Salmi discovered several inscriptions near Kosam which proved that Cunningham's original identification was correct. Excavations were carried out at Kosambī in 1937 and again between 1949 and 1955, which showed that the city had been inhabited from 1000 BCE onward.

What to See

Asoka's Pillar

The road cuts through the ramparts of the ancient city and following it for some distance, the pilgrim will see King Asoka's pillar in the fields on the left of the road. The pillar has no inscription but there is a large amount of graffiti from later ages and also some unusual circular marks on it. The pillar stood in a residential area of the city, probably at a main crossroads or in a square. The remains of houses and other buildings can be seen around the pillar. Another of Asoka's pillars, with an inscription addressed to religious officials at Kosambī, now stands in the Allahabad fort. This pillar may have originally stood at the Ghositārāma, though neither Fa Hien nor Huien Tsiang mention seeing any pillars at Kosambī.

Ghositārāma

About half a kilometer south-east of Asoka's pillar, through the fields, is the ruins of the Ghositārāma, the most famous of the several places where the Buddha used to stay while in Kosambī and where he delivered the Upakkilesa Sutta, the Kosambīya Sutta, the Jaliya Sutta and several other discourses.[8] Ānanda must have frequented the Ghositārāma often too, judging by the many discourses he delivered at this monastery.[9] We know from inscriptions found on the site that in the 1st century CE, a monk named Phagol donated a stone slab to be used 'for the worship of all the Buddhas by the monks residing in the Ghositārāma, the abode of the Buddha.' In the third year of King Kanishka's reign, the nun Buddhamitrā donated three statues of the Bodhisattva to the monastery. This generous and devout woman is the same nun described as a disciple of the monk Bala in the inscription on the famous statue of the Bodhisattva in Sārnāth. When Fa Hien visited Kosambī, he found monks residing in the Ghositārāma as of old,' but by Huien Tsiang's time it had become a deserted ruin. The Ghositārāma was identified during excavations which began at Kosambī in 1951. Inhabited as it was from the 5th century BCE to the 5th century CE, the various layers exposed during excavation make the outlines of the individual structures difficult

to detect, though several of the main ones are fairly clear.

The oldest structure on the site is a large stupa 25 meters by 25 meters, first built during the Mauryan period. This is no doubt the large stupa that Huien Tsiang saw in the Ghositārāma and which he said had been built by King Asoka. The base of the stupa was originally square but during later enlargements recesses were added, making it polygonal in shape. The stupa was provided with an elaborate system of drainage. A little to the east of the main stupa is the base of a smaller one, rectangular in shape, with a flight of stairs leading up to it. On either side of the stairs are two smaller stupas with shrines attached to them. Next to the stupa is a small well-built shrine in which a seated statue of Hariti was found. According to legend, Hariti was a female ogre who used to eat children until she was converted by the Buddha, after which she came to be considered as a sort of patron saint of children. The Chinese pilgrims often mention seeing shrines to Hariti in India's Buddhist monasteries.

All of these structures are in a courtyard of the main monastery and are surrounded by the monks' cells of which about 23 can still be traced. The main entrance to the monastery is on the north-west. In turn, the monastery is surrounded by a large wall nearly 4 meters thick in places. The Ghositārāma is situated right against the inside of the walls of Kosambī, just near the east gate, and is unique in that it is the only one of the monasteries established during the Buddha's time that is situated inside rather than outside a city.

How to Get There

Thirteen kilometers west of Allahabad on the main highway is the turnoff to Mandare, beyond which is Kosambī. The total distance from Allahabad is about 75 kilometers. Buses go to Kosambī but they are few and unreliable. It is better to take a taxi.

Around Kosambī

Prabhosa Hill

According to the commentary to the Buddhavamsa, the Buddha spent his sixth rains at a place called Mankula Hill about which neither the Tipitaka nor the commentaries give any information other than to say that it was in the vicinity of Kosambī.[10] As the only high ground for many kilometers around the city is a rocky outcrop called Prabhosa, we can identify it with Mankula Hill. To get to Prabhosa, return to where the road cuts through Kosambī's ramparts, proceed for about a kilometer and than take the first turn on the left. Prabhosa is a further 12 kilometers and the road is in quite good condition. Prabhosa rises suddenly from the surrounding countryside and overlooks the Yamunā River. There are many caves and rock ledges on the hill, especially on the steeper southern side. The cave now called Sita's Window may be where the Buddha stayed

when he came here. A barely visible inscription on the wall of the cave mentions gifts made to 'the arahats of the Kasyapiya sect.' There are numerous Jain inscriptions cut into the rocks on the hill and broken statues scattered around.

Allahabad Museum

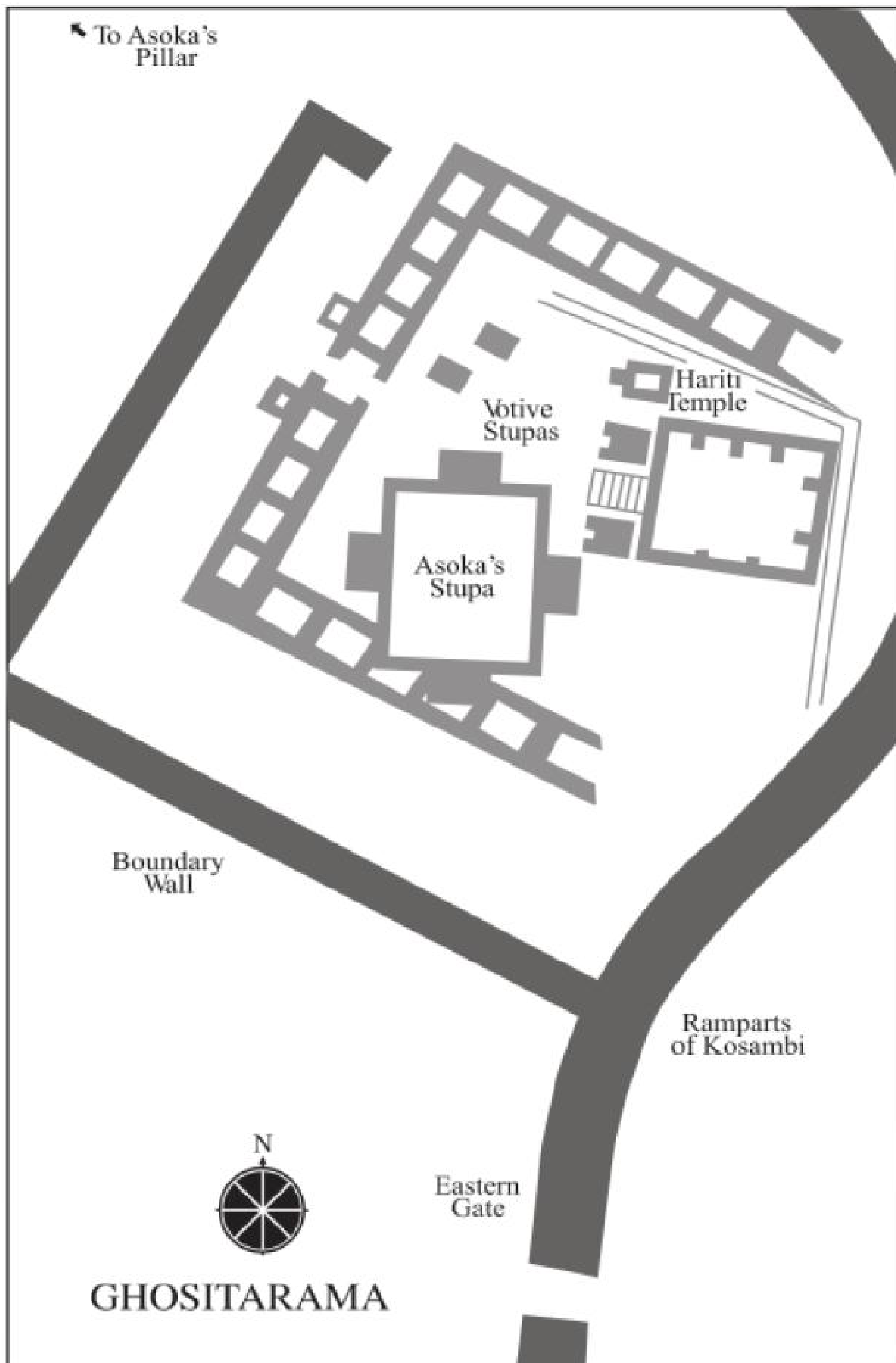
The ancient name of Allahabad was Payāga and Hindus have been coming to this city from before the time of the Buddha to bathe at the confluence of the Ganges and the Yamunā Rivers.[11] We are told that once, while traveling from Verañjā to Vārānasi the Buddha crossed the Ganges at Payaga.[12] Nothing from his time can still be seen in the city but there are two museums there which will be of some interest to the pilgrim, the first being the Allahabad Museum. This museum has an outstanding collection of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain sculptures as well as terracottas and other antiquities discovered at Kosambī. The museum is on Kamala Nehru Marg and opening times are 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM. (from May to June: 7:00 AM to 12:00 Noon) and closed on Wednesdays and public holidays.

Archaeological Museum, Dept of Ancient History, University of Allahabad

This museum houses most of the seals, inscriptions, sculpture and other items discovered during the excavations at Ghositārāma. The museum is open from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. (May to June: 7:00 AM to 12:00 PM) and closed on Sundays and university holidays.

How to Get There

Allahabad is on the main east-west railway line 122 kilometers from Vārānasi. The museum and the university are well-known landmarks within the city.


To Asoka's Pillar
Hariti Temple
Votive Stupas
Asoka's Stupa
Boundary Wall
Ramparts of Kosambi
N
Eastern Gate
GHOSITARAMA

MADHURĀ

Madhurā has five disadvantages. What five? The ground is uneven, there is a lot of dust, the dogs are fierce, there are evil yakkhas, and it is difficult to get alms food.[1]

During the Buddha's time Madhurā, now spelled Mathurā, was the capital of the kingdom of Surasena and was situated on the banks of the Yamunā River. Being on the outer edge of the Middle Land, the Buddha came to Madhurā only on a few occasions and he does not seem to have had a very good impression of the place. When Mahā Kaccana came here, he preached the Madhurā Sutta to the king in which he refuted the brahmins' claims to be superior to other castes.[2] Despite these minor associations with the Buddha and his direct disciples, Madhurā developed into a great center of Buddhism in later centuries. During the Kushāna and Gupta periods, the stone masons of Madhurā produced an enormous number and variety of works of art to adorn local shrines as well as those in many other parts of India.

When Fa Hien visited Madhurā he found 20 monasteries and up to 3000 monks. There were stupas honoring Sāriputta, Mahā Moggallāna and Ānanda, and also stupas honoring the Sutta Pitaka, the Vinaya and the Abhidhamma. Once a year, after the rains retreat, there was a great religious festival in which the whole population participated. 'All the monks come together in a great assembly and preach the Dhamma, after which offerings are presented to the stupa of Sāriputta, with all kinds of flowers and incense. All through the night, lamps are kept burning and skillful musicians are employed to perform... The nuns for the most part make their offerings to the stupa of Ānanda because it was he who requested the World Honored One to allow females to renounce their families. The novices mostly make their offerings to Rāhula. The professors of the Abhidharma make their offerings to it; those of the Vinaya to it.' Huien Tsiang mentioned seeing this same festival during his stay in Madhurā. He also saw three stupas built by King Asoka.

The vitality of Buddhism in Madhurā is testified to by the fact that well over a hundred years of digging in and around the town has brought to light a great number of Buddhist antiquities. In 1836 one Colonel L.R. Stacy found a statue of a full-busted girl, standing on a crouching dwarf, with a bird on her shoulder and a bird cage in her right hand. This charming sculpture now in the Indian Museum in Calcutta attracted much attention, and amateur archaeologists began digging in the mounds around the town looking for more. Cunningham explored the area in 1853 and again in 1862 and 1871. In 1860, while the court house was being

built, a great deal of sculpture was found, including images, railing stones, pillars, votive stupas and stone umbrellas. It was here that the famous 'Madhurā Buddha,' perhaps the most beautiful Buddha statue ever produced in India, was unearthed. It is now kept at Rastrapati Bhavan in New Delhi and cannot be viewed by the public. The last of a string of extraordinary archaeological finds from Madhurā took place in 1976 on the western outskirts of the city just near the waterworks. A vast treasure of sculpture from the Kushāna and Gupta periods was found, including two life-size statues of the Buddha, both of great beauty and inscribed with the name of the artist who made them. Unfortunately, none of Madhurā's numerous temples and shrines can be seen today as the modern city has grown up over them. To see Madhurā's past glory it is necessary to visit the city's museum.

What to See

The Government Museum

The Government Museum is undoubtedly one of India's best museums and because of its large collection of Buddhist sculpture is of particular interest to the Buddhist pilgrim. The most beautiful piece in the museum is a standing life-size Buddha statue. The statue dates from the mid 5th century CE and an inscription on the pedestal states that it was dedicated by a monk named Yasadinna. The right hand, now missing, was raised in the gesture of bestowing fearlessness while the left hand holds the fringe of the robe. The belt around the waist can be seen under the robe, making the drapery appear light and semi-transparent. The hand, face and the halo have been carved with great delicacy, giving the whole statue a realism unique in Indian sculpture. Two small devotees kneel in adulation at either side of the Buddha's feet.

Another fine sculpture is the small seated Buddha found at Katra, a few kilometers from Madhurā. The statue, which is perfectly preserved, sits cross-legged on a pedestal supported by three lions. It dates from the 2nd century CE and the inscription on the pedestal records that it was dedicated by the Buddhist nun Amohasi 'for the welfare and happiness of all beings.' Two crowned attendants peep from behind the Buddha while two devas, the one on the left carrying a bowl of gems and the one on the right raising its hand in a gesture of respect, fly towards the halo. The leaves and branches of the Bodhi Tree can be clearly seen behind the Buddha's head. The Buddha's eyes are wide open and the left hand placed firmly on the knee gives the impression of vigor and alertness.

Historically speaking, the most important sculpture in the museum is the portrait of King Kanishka, one of the few portraits of an historical personage to survive from ancient India. Although the head is missing, the splayed feet, the left hand touching the mace and the right hand

grasping the huge sword makes it clear that Kanishka was a no-nonsense monarch. The inscription on the statue reads: 'Great King, King of Kings, the Son of God, Kanishka.' Despite the military prowess that this portrait conveys, Kanishka was also a lover of the arts and did more to promote Buddhism than any other Indian king except Asoka.

The Government Museum is located not far from the Cantonment Railway Station. It is open from 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM, and is closed on Mondays. Between the 16th April and 30th June, the timings are 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

How to Get There

Madhurā (Mathurā) is 145 kilometers south of Delhi and 58 kilometers north-west of Agra on the main highway and railway line between the two cities. The Government Museum is about one kilometer from the railway station.

GURPA

Like towering peaks of dark blue clouds,
Like splendid edifices are these rocks,
Where the elephant's call fills the air,
These rocky heights delight my mind.[1]

One of the Buddha's most famous and important disciples was Mahā Kassapa. Austere in habit and stern in temperament, Mahā Kassapa convened the First Council after the Buddha's final Nirvana and came to be looked upon as his successor. While some monks lived in monasteries and had contact with other monks and lay people, Mahā Kassapa preferred the more ascetic life, spending much of his time in lonely forests and hills. The Tipitaka and the ancient Pali commentaries contain many details about Mahā Kassapa's life but strangely enough say nothing at all about how, when or where he died.

However, literature of other early schools, such as the Sarvāstivādin *Vinaya* and the *Divyāvadāna* tell the following story. Before the Buddha's final Nirvana he exchanged his robe for Mahā Kassapa's. Some twenty years later, feeling that death was approaching, the aged ascetic made his way to a remote mountain with the intention of climbing the top. When rocks barred his way he struck them with his staff and they opened to let him through. On arriving at the summit another cavity opened, Mahā Kassapa entered, fell into a deep meditative trance and the rocks closed around him. The story concludes by saying that in the distant future, when Maitreya appears in the world, he will come to this mountain, awaken Mahā Kassapa, receive the Buddha's robe from him and then proceed to proclaim the new dispensation. The place where all these events did and will take place was called Gurupadagiri (The Teacher's Foot Mountain) or more usually Kukkutapadagiri (The Cock's Foot Mountain), apparently because its three peaks suggested a cock's foot.

Kukkutapadagiri soon gained the reputation as an abode of ascetic and saints. In one account of it we read: 'Buddhist pilgrims from that and other countries come year by year to pay religious worship to Kassapa; if any should be distressed with doubts, directly the sun goes down the arahats arrive and begin to discourse with the pilgrims and explain their doubts and difficulties; and, having done so, forthwith disappear.' Two of the many famous people who lived on the mountain were the early Buddhist saint Sanavastika and the Mahayana philosopher Asanga. Both Huien Tsiang and Fa Hien visited the place, the former writing a description of it which still holds today. 'The sides of the mountain are high and rugged, the valleys and gorges are impenetrable. Tumultuous torrents rush down its sides, thick forests envelope the valleys whilst tangled shrubs grow along its cavernous heights. Soaring upwards into the air are three

pointed peaks; their tops surrounded by the vapors of heaven and their shapes lost in the clouds.' The last we hear of Mahā Kassapa's mountain in traditional Buddhist literature is in the biography of that great traveler Buddhagupta who visited it briefly during his wanderings in the 16th century.

During the 19th century several attempts were made to find Kukkutapadagiri. Cunningham suggested that it might be a low hill near the village of Kurkihar while Aurel Stein thought it could be identified with Sobnath Hill, some six kilometers south-west of Kurkihar. But neither of these suggestions was very convincing. Finally, in 1906 R. D. Banerjee discovered a mountain south-east of Gayā named Gurpa which corresponded with ancient descriptions of the place very well. Its name was a contraction of Gurupada, the sacred mountain's alternative name, there were Buddhist antiquities there and it had all the caves, fissures and peaks mentioned by the pilgrims of old. Today Gurpa is still surrounded by thick jungle and as such is one of the few sacred places in the Middle Land which still looks much as it might have done at the time of the Buddha.

What to See

Gurpa Mountain

At about 300 meters Gurpa is one of the highest mountains in the Ganges valley. From Gurpa village the pilgrim must walk through about a kilometer of jungle to get to its foot. From there a rough steep path leads to the summit. After about half an hour's strenuous climb, the pilgrim will come to an open flat rocky area on which there are several huge boulders. Between two of these is a rock pool with dark limpid water. The path continues winding upwards until it eventually leads to the base of a sheer cliff. To the right is a cave which is not passable and to the left is a narrow crack running from the top to the bottom of the cliff. This must be the place where, according to legend, Mahā Kassapa struck the rocks with his staff and it opened to let him pass. Entering this crack and preceding for about 70 meters the pilgrim must then turn left into a completely dark cave. A torch will make progress much easier. The cave opens on to a ledge from where the path continues over the rocks to the mouth of another cave. This cave ends at a spectacular drop at the very edge of which is a cistern cut out of the living rock. When Fa Hien came to Kukkutapadagiri, he saw a body of water in which, he was told, Mahā Kassapa used to bathe and from which pilgrims would take mud because of its supposed medicinal properties. Whether this cistern or the rock pool further down the mountain is the one referred to by Fa Hien is not clear.

Retracing one's steps to the entrance of the cave and continuing to climb, the pilgrim will soon arrive at the summit. A line of crudely built Hindu shrines sit on the very top of the mountain. Cemented into the walls of these are a statue of the Buddha, another of Tārā and several fragments of carved stone. On the floor in the last shrine is a stone with a pair of footprints and a 10th century inscription carved on it. It is likely that the ancient Buddhists believe these footprints to belong to Mahā Kassapa; locals now believe them to be those of the goddess of the mountain. In front of the shrines are the foundations of a large rectangular structure made of rough-hewn stones. This is probably the remains of Kukkutapadagiri's famous stupa, said to have been built by King Ajātasattu. On statues of Maitreya it is this stupa which is always depicted in his crown. Behind the shrines are three small, beautifully carved stone stupas dating from the Pāla period. The view from the top of Gurpa is particularly fine; to the east and west are Gurpa's two other peaks; to the north is Bihār's cultivated fields and to the south the jungle stretches away for as far as the eye can see.

How to Get There

From Gayā take the new bridge across the river and follow the Fatipur road via Fatipur to Gurpa village. The road is paved but rough as far as Fatipur and unpaved beyond that, a total distance of about 33 kilometers. No buses go to Gurpa so it will be necessary to hire a vehicle. From the village proceed by foot across the railway line and along one of the paths that lead to the mountain.

LAURIYA NANDANGAR

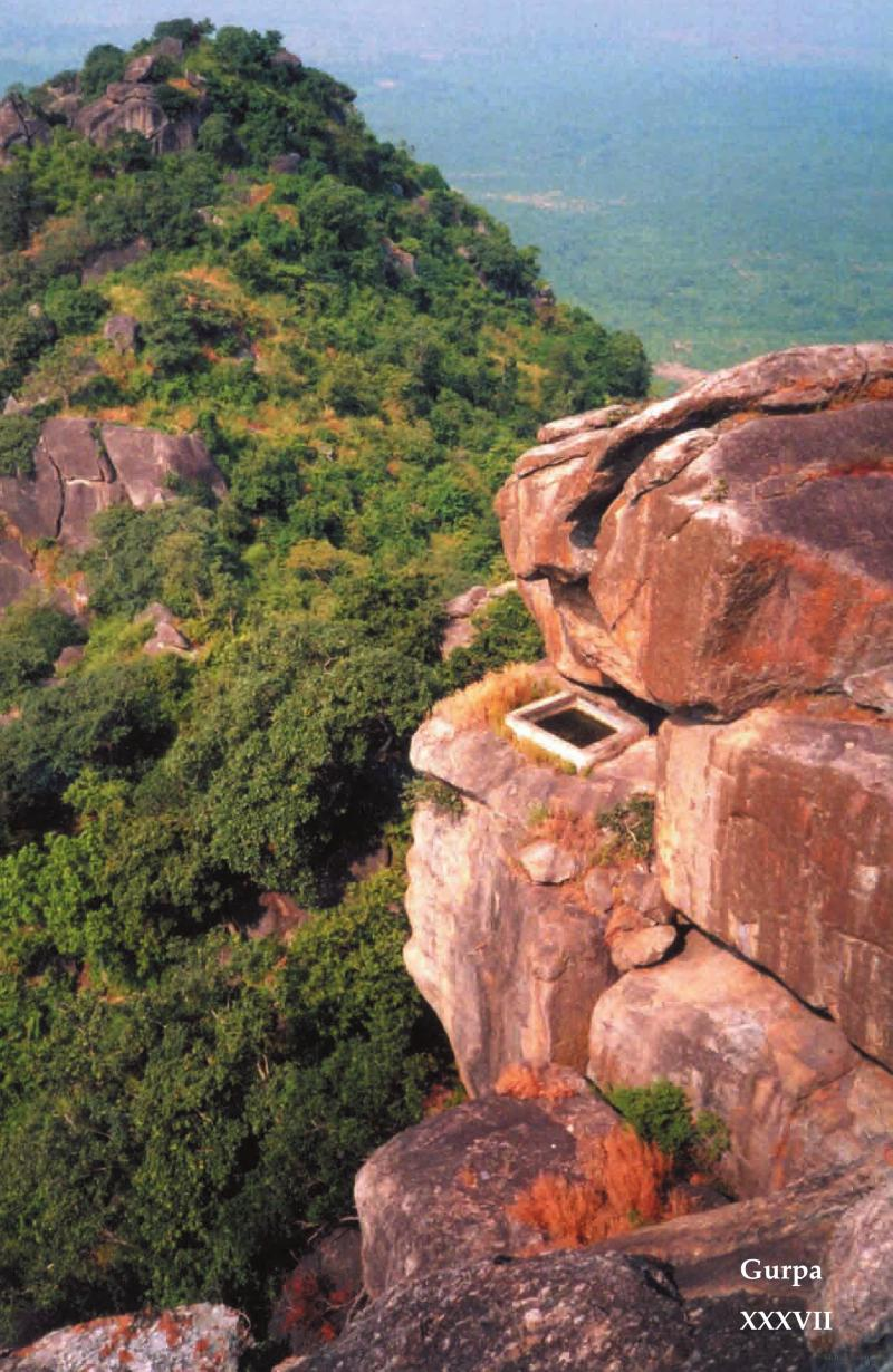
The small town of Lauriya Nandangar has no known association with the Buddha, but judging from the monuments in the area, it must have been of special significance to Buddhists in ancient times. Around the town there are about 20 grassy mounds in three rows, one running from east to west, and two others, parallel to each other, running from north to south. These mounds are probably the remains of ancient stupas, and their excavation has brought to light fragments of earthen vessels, charred human bones, and in one case, a small human figure made from thin beaten gold. The stupas lack any developed features, indicating that they are very early. But it is two other monuments in Lauriya Nandangar that make it of interest to Buddhists.

What to See

Asoka's Pillar

It is believed that King Asoka originally erected about 40 pillars, but only a few of these survive undamaged. Some were struck by lightning, some fell and were smashed, some were dragged to other sites, and some, like the Sāñchī pillar, were broken up to provide stone for various purposes. It is only the Lauriya Nandangar pillar that remains at its original site with its capital intact, thus giving a unique glimpse of the powerful impression that these majestic monuments once produced. The shaft of the pillar has a gradual inward slope and rises 12.8 meters though it may have sunk a few meters into the ground over the centuries. The capital consists of a fringe more squat than the Sārnāth capital, and with a spiral band below it. Above this is the drum with a frieze of geese running around it from left to right. On the drum is a single crouching lion with finely carved features, powerful and majestic. Unfortunately, the face of the lion is missing, probably having been shot at by a cannon when Mir Jumla's army passed this way in 1660. Six of Asoka's edicts issued in 244 BCE are inscribed on the Lauriya Nandangar pillar, and because they give a good idea of the scope of his attempts to apply Buddhist values to his administration, they are worth quoting in full:

> 'Beloved-of-the-Gods speaks thus: This Dhamma edict was written twenty-six years after my coronation. Happiness in this world and the next is difficult to obtain without much love for the Dhamma, much self-examination, much respect, much fear (of evil), and much enthusiasm. But through my instruction this regard for Dhamma and love of Dhamma has grown day by day, and will continue to grow. And my officers of high, low and middle rank


Gurpa

XXXVII

Lauriya











are practising and conforming to Dhamma, and are capable of inspiring others to do the same. Mahamatras in border areas are doing the same. And these are my instructions: to protect with Dhamma, to make happiness through Dhamma and to guard with Dhamma.'

'Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, speaks thus: Dhamma is good, but what constitutes Dhamma? (It includes) little evil, much good, kindness, generosity, truthfulness and purity. I have given the gift of sight in various ways. To two-footed and four-footed beings, to birds and aquatic animals, I have given various things including the gift of life. And many other good deeds have been done by me. This Dhamma edict has been written that people might follow it and it might endure for a long time. And the one who follows it properly will do something good.'

'Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, speaks thus: People see only their good deeds, saying, "I have done this good deed." But they do not see their evil deeds, saying, "I have done this evil deed" or "This is called evil." But this (tendency) is difficult to see. One should think like this: "It is these things that lead to evil, to violence, to cruelty, anger, pride and jealousy. Let me not ruin myself with these things." And further, one should think: "This leads to happiness in this world and the next"'

'Beloved-of-the-Gods speaks thus: This Dhamma edict was written twenty-six years after my coronation. My Rajjukas are working among the people, among many hundreds of thousands of people. The hearing of petitions and the administration of justice has been left to them so that they can do their duties confidently and fearlessly and so that they can work for the welfare, happiness and benefit of the people in the country. But they should remember what causes happiness and sorrow, and being themselves devoted to Dhamma, they should encourage the people in the country (to do the same), that they may attain happiness in this world and the next. These Rajjukas are eager to serve me. They also obey other officers who know my desires, who instruct the Rajjukas so that they can please me. Just as a person feels confident having entrusted his child to an expert nurse, thinking: "The nurse will keep my child well," even so, the Rajjukas have been appointed by me for the welfare and happiness of the people in the country. The hearing of petitions and the administration of justice has been left to the Rajjukas so that they can do their duties unperturbed, fearlessly and confidently. It is my desire that there should be uniformity in law and uniformity in sentencing. I even go this far, to grant a three-day stay for those in prison who have been tried and sentenced to death. During this time their relatives

can make appeals to have the prisoners' lives spared. If there is none to appeal on their behalf, the prisoners can give gifts in order to make merit for the next world, or observe fasts. Indeed it is my wish that in this way, even if a prisoner's time is limited, they can prepare for the next world, and that people's Dhamma practice, self-control and generosity may grow.'

'Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, speaks thus: Twenty-six years after my coronation, various animals were declared to be protected—parrots, mynas, aruna, ruddy geese, wild ducks, bats, queen ants, terrapins, boneless fish, tortoises, porcupines, squirrels, deer, bulls, okapinda, wild asses, wild pigeons, domestic pigeons and all four-footed creatures that are neither useful nor edible. Those nanny goats, ewes and sows which are with young or giving milk to their young are protected, and so are young ones less than six months old. Cocks are not to be caponized, husks hiding living beings are not to be burnt and forests are not to be burnt, either without reason or to kill creatures. One animal is not to be fed to another. On the three Caturmasis, the three days of Tisa and during the fourteenth and fifteenth of the Uposatha, fish are protected and not to be sold. During these days animals are not to be killed in the elephant reserves or the fish reserves either. On the eighth of every fortnight, on the fourteenth and fifteenth, on Tisa, Punarvasu, the three Caturmasis and other auspicious days, bulls are not to be castrated, billy goats, rams, boars and other animals that are usually castrated are not to be. On Tisa, Punarvasu, Caturmasis and the fortnight of Caturmasis, horses and bullocks are not to be branded. In the twenty-six years since my coronation prisoners have been given amnesty on twenty-five occasions.'

'Beloved-of-the-Gods speaks thus: Twelve years after my coronation, I started to have Dhamma edicts written for the welfare and happiness of the people, and so that not transgressing them, they might grow in the Dhamma. Thinking: "How can the welfare and happiness of the people be secured?" I give attention to my relatives, to those dwelling near and those dwelling far, so I can lead them to happiness and then I act accordingly. I do the same for all groups. I have honored all religions with various honors. But I consider it best to meet with people personally. This Dhamma edict' was written twenty-six years after my coronation.'

These same edicts are to be found on the Topra and Meerut pillars, now in Delhi, the Allahabad pillar, and the pillars at Lauriya Araraj and Rampurva, both locations not far from Lauriya Nandangar. As well as Asoka's inscription, the pillar has a large amount of graffiti on it, both ancient and modern. Why Asoka chose this site to erect a pillar is not known, but it has been suggested that in ancient times, Lauriya

Nandangar was one of the main stops on the pilgrims' route from Patna to Lumbinī.

Stupa

About one and a half kilometers from Asoka's pillar, behind the local sugar mill, is the ruins of what must have been one of the largest stupas ever built in India. Although the stupa is now only about 24 meters high it has a circumference of nearly 457 meters. The base of the stupa rises in a series of huge terraces, the lower ones having a polygonal plan, while the upper ones are circular. Excavation revealed that the core of the stupa was made of earth. At a depth of 11 meters from the top a smaller complete stupa was found which had no relic inside it. However, beside it was a casket containing a long strip of birch bark, which proved to be a page from a Buddhist sacred book dating from about the 4th century CE. A stupa of such enormous proportions must have been built to enshrine some very precious relic or to commemorate some very important event but what it was remains a mystery.

How to Get There

Lauriya Nandangar is 26 kilometers from Bettiah, which is on the main road north of Patna. Bettiah is 190 kilometers from Patna via Motihari and Muzaffarpur.

Barabar and Kaudol Hills

To the north of Gayā are a number of lonely and boulder-strewn hills collectively called Barabar and Nāgārjuni. In ancient times the area was known Pravaragiri, 'the excellent hill' from which the name Barabar is derived. These hills must have been thickly forested during the Buddha's time and their many rocks and crannies would have made them a favorite haunt of wandering ascetics and Buddhist monks. There are several locations around the Barabar Hills connected with the the life of the Buddha and the long history of Buddhism in India.

What to See

Lomās Rishi Cave

Ascetics in India have always favored caves to live in; because they were cool in the summer and because they tend to shut out noise, they were suitable for meditation. When natural caves were not available, it was possible to cut artificial ones, and in India this practice developed into an art that reached its peak with the great cave temples of Ajantā and Ellorā. The man-made caves on Barabar Hill represent the beginning of this art. All four caves were probably commissioned by King Asoka and gifted to the Ājīvakas, a sect of naked ascetics founded by Makkhali Gosāla at the time of the Buddha, but which eventually died out. King Asoka's gift of these caves proves that despite his fervor for Buddhism, he was still tolerant enough to give support to other sects and religions.

The most interesting cave on Barabar Hill is the Lomās Rishi Cave. The inside of the cave consists of a long barrel-vaulted hall with an antechamber at one end resembling a small round hut. The walls of the hall are highly polished, although the roof and the antechamber remain unfinished. But it is the facade of the cave that makes it so interesting, being as it is an exact facsimile in stone of the wood and thatch peak roofed huts that ascetics, including Buddhist monks, used to live in. Two upright posts inclining slightly inward support the two main rafters, and these together with a row of subsidiary rafters support the roof, which consists of three laminated sheets. Above the door are semicircular arches. Between the lower ones is a procession of beautifully carved elephants worshipping stupas, which, it should be understood, were objects of reverence in non-Buddhist religions too. Between the upper arches is a latticework window. The stone mason has copied every detail of the carpenter's work so carefully that the whole thing looks like a wooden but petrified hut. Although the Lomās Rishi Cave dates from the Mauryan period, the inscription above the door was added several centuries after the cave's construction.

Sudama and Karna Chaupar Cave

There are three other caves on Barabar Hill, one somewhat out of the way and two others near the Lomās Rishi Cave. A short distance to the left of the Lomās Rishi is the Sudama Cave which has no facade but which has a most impressive interior. The main hall is 10 meters long, 6 meters wide and 3.7 meters high. The whole interior is beautifully polished and the angles where the surfaces meet are perfect. At the end of the hall is a circular hut with irregular perpendicular groves in imitation of straw and bamboo. On the wall of the main entrance is an inscription by King Asoka which reads: 'In the twelfth year of his coronation, King Piyadasi gifted this Nigrodha Cave to the Ājīvakas.' Attempts have been made to obliterate this inscription, perhaps by later inhabitants of the cave who were rivals of the Ājīvakas.

On the other side of the long ridge in which both the Lomās Rishi and the Sudama Caves are cut is the Karna Chaupar Cave. The interior of this cave is similar to the other two except that it does not have an antechamber and it has a platform against its west wall perhaps used as a teacher's seat, a bed or a shrine. The inscription at the entrance of the cave, once again by King Asoka, reads: 'In the nineteenth year of his coronation, King Piyadasi gifted this cave on the pleasant Khalatika Hill as protection against the rain.' Once again, the inscription has been defaced.

Gopika Cave

Walking about 2 kilometers north-east from the foot of Barabar Hill, the pilgrim comes to the Nāgārjuni Hill. The Gopika Cave and the large flight of stairs leading up to it can easily be seen as one approaches through the paddy fields. Gopika is the largest of these ancient caves, its hall being 12.3 meters long, 5.2 meters wide and 6.5 meters high. The semicircular ends of the hall and the barrel-vaulted roof are perfectly executed, and once again the whole surface is beautifully polished. Above the entrance on the outside is an inscription by King Dasaratha, Asoka's grandson. It reads: 'The Gopi's Cave, an abode lasting as long as the sun and moon, was caused to be excavated by King Dasaratha, Beloved-of-the-Gods, on his ascension to the throne, as a hermitage for the most devoted ascetics.' In the passage leading into the cave are several other inscriptions from later periods.

Kawadol

South-west of Barabar Hill is a rocky, high, pointed hill named Kawadol which is probably 'the lovely, the beautiful Pāsānaka Shrine' where the events in the Pārāyanavagga of the *Sutta Nipāta* took place.[1] When Huien Tsiang was on his way to Bodh Gayā from Patna, he passed by the Barabar Hills and described several large monasteries in the vicinity, the most

important founded by and named after a monk called Sīlabhadra. Born in Bengal and ordained by Dharmapāla at Nālandā, Sīlabhadra later distinguished himself in debates with non-Buddhist acsetics. As a reward for his skills, the king gifted him the revenue of a town and from this he built a monastery–the ruins of which can still be seen.

At the foot of Kawadol Hill is a huge mound with several stone pillars emerging from it and nearby, sheltered under a grove of ancient tamarind trees, is a large and exceptionally fine image of the Buddha. Its face has been damaged by iconoclasts but other than this it is in good condition. Cunningham measured the statue and found it to be 2.4 meters across the shoulders and 1.4 meters from knee to knee. The image's eyes are depicted as almost completely closed giving it a countenance of great inner serenity. The hands are in the earth-touching gesture and on the pedestal below it are arched niches with small Buddha images and stupas in them. An inscription above these niches has not yet been deciphered but is probably either the Epitome of Dhamma or the name of the person who donated the statue. To the right of the statue is the only remaining part of the throne that was once behind it–a pillar and capital and a finely carved leogryph held aloft by a warrior who is in turn standing on the back of an elephant.

When Francis Buchanan came here in 1811, much of the temple that had enshrined this Buddha statue still existed. It measured 40 by 27 meters, was made of brick and ten or twelve of the pillars that had supported the roof were still standing. Buchanan also saw door and window frames, pillar capitals and fragments of sculpture but most of this has disappeared.

Many of the boulders around Kawadol have Hindu images carved on them and it is well worthwhile spending some time having a look at them.

How to Get There

Take the main road north of Gayā about 22 kilometers and turn right at the road that leads to the Bela North Railway Station. The turnoff is clearly marked. Barabar Hill is 15 kilometers from the turnoff and the whole distance is passable only by jeep. About 8 kilometers along the road, at the village of Balua, is the turnoff to Kawadol, a further 5 kilometers. Kawadol is the steep pointed hill with the boulders balanced precariously on its top.

Around Barabar and Kawadol Hills

Avalokitesvara at Dharawat

If the pilgrim returns to the main Gayā-Patna road and continues north he or she will eventually arrive at Makdumpur. The turnoff on the left at the police station leads to the village of Dharawat, a distance of about

Barabar









Scenery

XL

4 kilometers. In the village is a magnificent image of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. This image is about 1.5 meters high and depicts the bodhisattva standing in a relaxed posture, with twelve arms and a high crown in which is nestled an image of the Buddha. To the right is a pot from which a vine emerges and arches itself over the bodhisattva's body. Numerous tendrils branch from the vine, each with a tiny bodhisattva on its end. At Avalokitesvara's feet are his consorts, Tārā and Bhrikutī each accompanied by a dwarf. There are also several figures on the pedestal, the main one being a hungry spirit beseeching the bodhisattva to quench its thirst with the ambrosia of compassion. It is worth going all the way to Dharawat just to see this outstanding and beautiful image.

Sāvatthī

The fair capital of the Kosalans
Excites the mind, charms the eye,
Gives the ear the ten sounds
And provides food enough for all.[1]

Sāvatthī, the capital of Kosala, was said to have derived its name from the fact that everything was available there (*sabbāni atthi*) and it was indeed one of the wealthiest and most vibrant cities in the Middle Land. The Buddha visited Sāvatthī several times before finally making it his headquarters in the 20th year of his enlightenment. From then on, he spent every rains retreat except his last in the environs of the city. He had probably decided to limit his wanderings at this time due to advancing age (he was 56) and he no doubt chose Sāvatthī as his base because of the generous support given to him by the city's wealthiest merchants.

While in Rājagaha on business, Anāthapindika went to visit his brother-in-law, whom he found so preoccupied with making arrangements for a feast that he failed to welcome Anāthapindika in his usual friendly manner. 'What is the big occasion?' Anāthapindika asked. 'A wedding? A visit by the king?' His brother-in-law replied that he was preparing a meal for the Buddha and his monks. Simply hearing the word 'Buddha' filled Anāthapindika with such joy that he expressed his desire to go and meet this 'Buddha' then and there. Being told that now was not the proper time, he decided to go and see the Buddha the next day, first thing in the morning. So overjoyed was Anāthapindika at the rare privilege of meeting a fully enlightened human being, and so expectant was he, that he woke up three times during the night thinking it was near daybreak. Finally, he set out before dawn, but as he left the town and entered the jungle, he realized that it would still be some time before light appeared, and he began to get frightened. He hesitated and considered turning back when suddenly a spirit appeared, illuminating the whole area and encouraging him to continue. Anāthapindika and the Buddha met in the early morning light, and later Anāthapindika invited the Buddha to spend the next rains retreat in Sāvatthī. The Buddha agreed, making it clear that he expected Anāthapindika to provide him and his monks with a quiet place to reside in during his stay: 'Householder, the Tathāgata delights in solitary places.' 'I understand, Lord. I understand, Happy One,' replied Anāthapindika.[2]

When Anāthapindika arrived back in Sāvatthī, he began looking around for a place to accommodate the Buddha. The most suitable place proved to be a pleasure park just outside Sāvatthī owned by Prince Jeta. Anāthapindika approached the prince and asked him what price he wanted

for his park, but he replied that he was not interested in selling. Anāthapindika kept insisting that Prince Jeta name a price, and eventually, as much out of exasperation as to put him off, the prince quoted an unrealistically high price of a hundred thousand gold pieces. To his astonishment, Anāthapindika accepted. Soon servants arrived with carts full of gold coins and began spreading them on the ground. At this point, Prince Jeta relented, realizing how determined Anāthapindika was to have the park, and the rest of the money was used to build a large monastic complex.[3] The *Vinaya* describes the complex as consisting of 'halls, monastery buildings, cells, porches, attendance halls, fire rooms, toilets, covered walkways, wells, bathrooms, lotus ponds and sheds.'[4] And in honor of the two men who were responsible for its coming into being, the place was called Jeta's Grove, Anāthapindika's Park .

In the coming years, several other equally large monasteries were built around Sāvatthī, the Pubbārāma (the Eastern Monastery, now represented by the village of Khanbari) and the Rajakārāma being the two most famous, and it was in these monasteries and other locations around Sāvatthī that the Buddha delivered most of his discourses.

Of all the events in the Buddha's life that took place in Sāvatthī, the most celebrated was the conversion of Angulimāla. This robber and murderer had killed so many people that villagers in outlying districts packed their belongings and moved into the city. From each of his victims, he cut a finger and hung it on a string around his neck, hence his name Angulimāla, Finger Necklace. When the Buddha heard about this, he set out for the area where Angulimāla was known to operate, with the specific purpose of meeting him. On a lonely stretch of road, Angulimāla saw the Buddha and began to chase him. But although he ran his fastest he was unable to catch up with the Buddha, who continued to walk at a leisurely pace. In frustration and bewilderment, Angulimāla called out to the Buddha: 'Stop, monk!' To which the Buddha replied: 'I have stopped, Angulimāla. You too should stop.' Angulimāla asked the Buddha what he meant, and the Buddha replied that he had stopped killing and harming beings and that Angulimāla should do the same. The murderer threw down his sword, and bowing at the Buddha's feet, asked to be ordained as a monk. Later Angulimāla became enlightened, but even then he had to endure violence and insults at the hands of those who remembered his terrible past.[5]

In the centuries after the Buddha, Sāvatthī declined, but the Jetavana continued to remain an important center of Buddhism. When Fa Hien came to Sāvatthī, the city was no more than a small town, already in decline and inhabited by only about 200 families, although the Jetavana seems to have still been relatively thriving. 'Its gate faces east and it has two chambers before which stand two stone pillars. On the top of the left pillar is a wheel and on the top of the right one is a bull. The water in the pool is clear, the trees and plants luxuriant, and flowers of many

colors make a lovely sight.' Inside the Jetavana, he saw a temple, probably the Gandhakuti, which housed a famous sandalwood statue of the Buddha. 'The Jetavana Monastery was originally seven stories high. The rulers and citizens of many countries vied with one another in making offerings here, hanging silk pennants and canopies, scattering flowers and lighting lamps which burnt day and night without ever being extinguished. Then a rat carried off the wick from one of the lamps in its mouth, thereby setting fire to the flowers, pennants and canopies. The whole seven-story building went up in flames. The rulers and citizens of all the countries around lamented bitterly, thinking that the sandalwood image must have also been burnt. But four or five days later, when they opened the door of a small temple on the east, they were amazed and overjoyed to find the image unscathed. Together they rebuilt the monastery as a two-story building, and moved the statue back to its original place.'

Fa Hien also tells us how moved he and his companion were to walk where the Buddha had walked, and of the amazement of the Indian monks on seeing Chinese monks for the first time. 'On arriving at the Jetavana Monastery, when Fa Hien and Tao Ching reflected that the Lord had lived here for twenty five years, they regretted having been born in a far-off country. Of the companions who had traveled with them through many lands, some had to turn back and some had died. As they gazed at the places where the Buddha could no longer be seen, they were deeply moved and their hearts were filled with sorrow. The monks there came forward to question them. "Where do you come from? " they asked. "We come from China," replied Fa Hien. "How wonderful," exclaimed the monks, "that men from a far-off country should come all this way to seek the Dhamma!" And they commented to each other: "Not from earliest times have any of our teachers ever seen a Chinese monk here!" '

By Huien Tsiang's time, both Sāvatthī and the Jetavana were deserted and ruined. Of the Jetavana, he says: 'The residences (of the monks) were wholly destroyed; the foundations only remain, with the exception of one solitary brick building which stands alone in the midst of the ruins and contains an image of the Buddha.' However, archaeological investigation shows that shortly after Huien Tsiang's visit, all monasteries at the Jetavana were restored, new ones were built, and it continued to flourish right up to the twelfth century, after which it was finally deserted and swallowed up by the jungle.

In 1863, using information given in Fa Hien's and Huien Tsiang's accounts of their travels, Cunningham identified the Jetavana, which had come to be called Saheth, and also Sāvatthī, which was called Maheth. He did some digging, finding an inscription that confirmed his identification, and returned again in 1876 to do some more. Excavations have been done on about half a dozen other occasions since then, the last time by Japanese archaeologists in the late 1980s. Today, the ruins of the Jetavana are surrounded by well-maintained gardens, and because

few pilgrims or tourists visit the place, it has a particularly peaceful and undisturbed environment, with monkeys and peacocks sometimes seen amongst the trees and shrubs.

What to See

Nava Jetavana Vihāra

Just across the road from the main entrance of the archaeological park is the Nava Jetavana Mahāvihāra, a modern temple built by the well-known Sri Lankan monk Venerable Metivala Sangharatana. The temple's shrine contains some pleasing murals painted by a well-known Sri Lankan artist. The majority of the paintings represent incidents in the Buddha's life that took place at Sāvatthī, though the four main events in the Buddha's life as well as important events in Buddhist history are also represented. The paintings are in numbered panels. They are:

(1) Prince Siddhattha's life before his enlightenment.
(2) Māra tempts the Buddha just prior to his enlightenment.
(3) The Buddha's first teaching at Sārnāth.
(4) The Buddha's final Nirvana at Kusināra.
(5) Anāthapindika meets the Buddha.
(6–7) The purchase of the Jetavana.
(8) Planting the Ānanda Bodhi Tree.
(9) The construction of the Pubbārāma.

(10) Cakkhupāla became a monk late in life, and after making a strenuous effort, attained enlightenment. However, due to some evil done in the past, he also became blind. One day as he walked up and down, he trod on and killed many insects, and when the other monks saw this, they reported it to the Buddha. He told them that only acts done with intention would have a karmic effect.

(11) Mattakundali was the only son of a wealthy but extremely mean father. One day he fell sick, and hoping to avoid paying a doctor, Mattakundali's father put him outside so he would not have to offer hospitality to those who came to comfort his son. When the Buddha came to hear of this, he appeared in front of Mattakundali just as he died, and so happy was he to see the Buddha that he was reborn in a heaven realm.

(12) A man married a woman who turned out to be barren, so he took a second wife. The first wife saw her as a rival and developed a deep jealousy for her. When the second wife became pregnant, the first wife caused her to have a miscarriage. Throughout several rebirths, the two women carried on their rivalry and hatred, until the first wife was reborn as a yakkhini who tried to eat the baby of the second wife. Eventually, the Buddha encountered the two, told them how their longstanding hatred had caused them both so much misery, and managed to bring about a reconciliation between them.

(13) Devadatta, the Buddha's evil cousin, repented his actions towards the end of his life and asked to be taken to see the Buddha at the Jetavana to make amends. But he died just before seeing the Buddha and was swallowed up by a hole in the earth.

(14) The Buddha and Ānanda nursing a sick monk.

(15) On the return journey after massacring the Sakyans, Vidūdabha's army slept in a dry river bed, and during the night a flash flood swept them away.

(16) A poor man had a wife of great beauty whom King Pasenadi fell in love with. The king made the poor man his servant with the intention of having him killed so he could have the beautiful wife for himself. The poor man was given an impossible task to do and told that if he did not finish it he would be executed. Afterwards, the king could not sleep when he thought of the evil he had intended to commit. The court brahmins told him he would be freed from his bad kamma if he performed a great sacrifice. However, he met the Buddha who taught him the Dhamma and put his mind to rest.

(17) Once, a man went hunting with his dogs, and on the way passed a monk. He later failed to catch anything, and being superstitious, blamed this on having seen the monk. On his way home, he passed the monk, and in anger set his dogs on the monk, who climbed a tree to escape the dogs. The monk's robe fell onto the hunter, and the dogs, mistaking their master for the monk, attacked him and injured him so badly that he died.

(18) The nun Uppalavannā retired to the forest to meditate, only to be raped by a hunter, who was later consumed by fire.

(19) Pātācārā's husband died from a snakebite, and so she and her two infants set off for her parents' home. On the way, she had to cross Achiravati River, then in flood. She left the oldest child on the bank, instructing him to come when signaled, and then carried the other child across the river and left him on the opposite bank. While she was wading across the river again, an eagle swooped down and carried off the youngest child, and in a frenzy, Patācārā waved her arms frantically to frighten the bird away. The oldest child, thinking this was a signal to come, jumped into the river and was carried away by the current. Patācārā returned home, only to find both of her parents had been killed when their house burned down. These tragedies drove Patācārā mad, and she wandered through Sāvatthī half naked until she met the Buddha, who consoled her and taught her the Dhamma.

(20) A young woman named Kisāgotamī brought her dead child to the Buddha, and asked him to help. He told her to get a mustard seed from a house where no one had ever died. As she searched and was unable to find even a single household in which no one had died, the reality of death gradually dawned on her, and her grief subsided.

(21) King Pasenadi was disappointed when he heard that his queen had given birth to a daughter instead of a son. But the Buddha urged him to consider that a daughter is just as capable of being successful and accomplished as a son is.

(22) The Buddha being pursued by Angulimāla.

(23) A rival sect tried to slander the Buddha by inciting a woman to fake pregnancy and then publicly accuse the Buddha of being the father. While she was making the accusation, a mouse gnawed through the cord holding the pillow around the woman's waist. The fraud was exposed, and the Buddha was vindicated.

(24) To confound his detractors and rivals, the Buddha performed an amazing psychic feat, making fire and water come from his body.

(25) The First Council at Rājagaha.

(26) The Third Council at Patna.

(27) King Asoka sent his son, Mahinda, to introduce the Dhamma to Sri Lanka. Mahinda met the Sri Lankan king, Devanampiyatissa, while he was hunting and converted him.

(28) King Milinda, one of the heirs of Alexander the Great, becomes a Buddhist after his famous discussion with the monk, Nāgasena.

(29) Anagārika Dharmapāla and the Mahābodhi Temple.

(30) Dr Bimrao Ambedkar and half a million of his followers, all untouchables, renounce Hinduism and become Buddhists on 14^{th} of October 1955. This was the most significant event in the revival of Buddhism in modern India.

(31) Venerable Sangharatana, with the simple hut he lived in while building the Nava Jetavana Mahavihāra, and Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the Vice-President of India, opening the temple on 31^{st} December 1988.

Temple 12

Entering the Jetavana by the main gate, proceeding along the path and turning left, the pilgrim will come to a small temple. The temple consists of a main shrine with a circumambulatory passage around it and two smaller shrines on either side. It is likely that the main shrine contained a statue of the Buddha, while the two smaller ones contained statues of Avalokitesvara and Maitreya. During excavation of this temple, a human skull and other bones were found on the floor.

Monastery 19

At the end of the path is a monastery consisting of a courtyard with a well, surrounded by 21 cells. On the eastern side is a shrine with a circumambulatory passage around it. This monastery was first built in the 6^{th} century and then rebuilt again on the same plan in about the 11^{th} century. Among the many antiquities found in this monastery is a statue of Avalokitesvara from the 8^{th} or 9^{th} century, a terracotta tablet containing a representation of the Buddha from the 5^{th} or 6^{th} century, a statue of

Kubera made of red Madhurā sandstone, and fragmentary sculptures made of the black stone found around Gayā. One cell was found to contain a bed made of brick, with one end slightly raised to form a pillow. Another cell had a large earthen jar half buried in the floor, probably used to store grain, and beside it was a bronze cup and an iron ladle.

But the most interesting object found in this monastery was a copperplate inscription of King Govindachandra, the husband of Queen Kumaradevī, who built the Dharmachakrajina Monastery at Sārnāth. The inscription was found carefully packed in a clay case buried under the floor of a cell and was issued on a date equivalent to the 23rd of June 1130 CE. It records the gift of six villages together with their revenue to the monks residing at the Jetavana, of whom a monk named Buddhabhattaraka was the chief. To make sure the grant was known to all, it was announced before the whole court: 'kings, queens, heirs-apparent, ministers, priests, door-keepers, generals, treasurers, record keepers, physicians, astrologers, chamberlains, messengers and officers charged with the care of elephants, horses, towns and mines.' It is interesting to note that some of the villages mentioned in the inscription still exist and are still known by their ancient names.

The Eight Stupas

A short distance to the north of Monastery 19 is a cluster of eight brick stupas. These stupas were probably built to enshrine the ashes of particularly revered monks who resided in the Jetavana throughout the centuries. One stupa was found to contain a sealing with the name Buddhadeva on it dating from the 5th century.

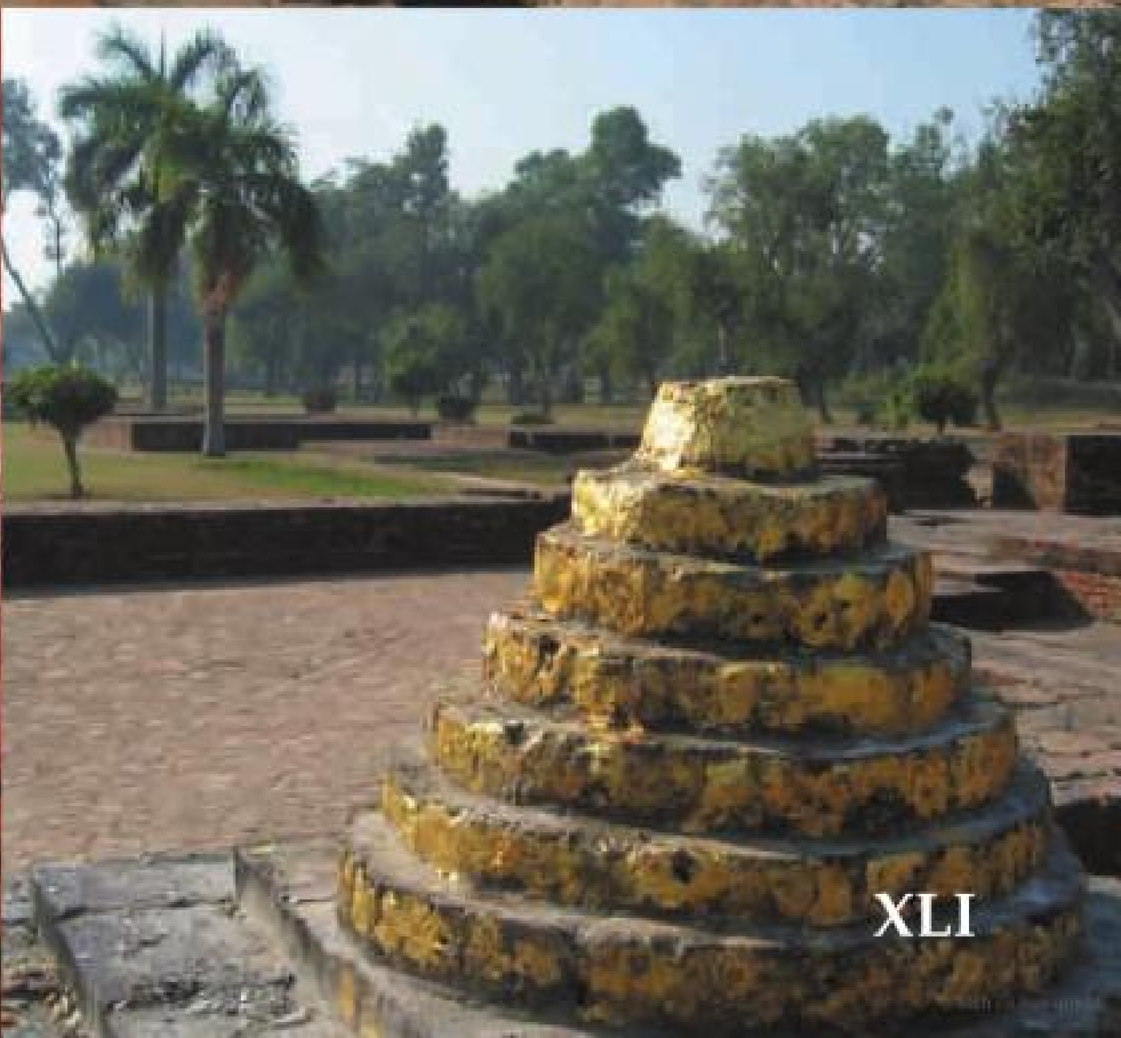
The Bodhi Tree

Further along the main path are the foundations of several structures with a tree growing from them, often identified with the Ānanda Bodhi Tree. According to the commentary on the *Jātakas*, when people came to Jetavana to pay their respects to the Buddha and found him absent, they would leave their flowers and garland offerings at the door of the Gandhakuti. When Anāthapindika heard about this, he asked the Buddha how people could pay their respects to him when he was absent, and the Buddha suggested that it could be done by placing the offerings at a Bodhi Tree. Accordingly, a seed was brought from the Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gayā and with great ceremony was planted at the Jetavana. Because the seed was planted by Ānanda, the tree came to be known as the Ānanda Bodhi Tree.[6] However, as the Jetavana was abandoned to the jungle for nearly a thousand years and as there is no archaeological evidence indicating where the Ānanda Bodhi Tree actually stood, the identification of this tree with the original is highly doubtful. The commentary to the *Jātaka* says the tree was planted near the main gate of the Jetavana which is thought to have been somewhere near the present Burmese Temple.





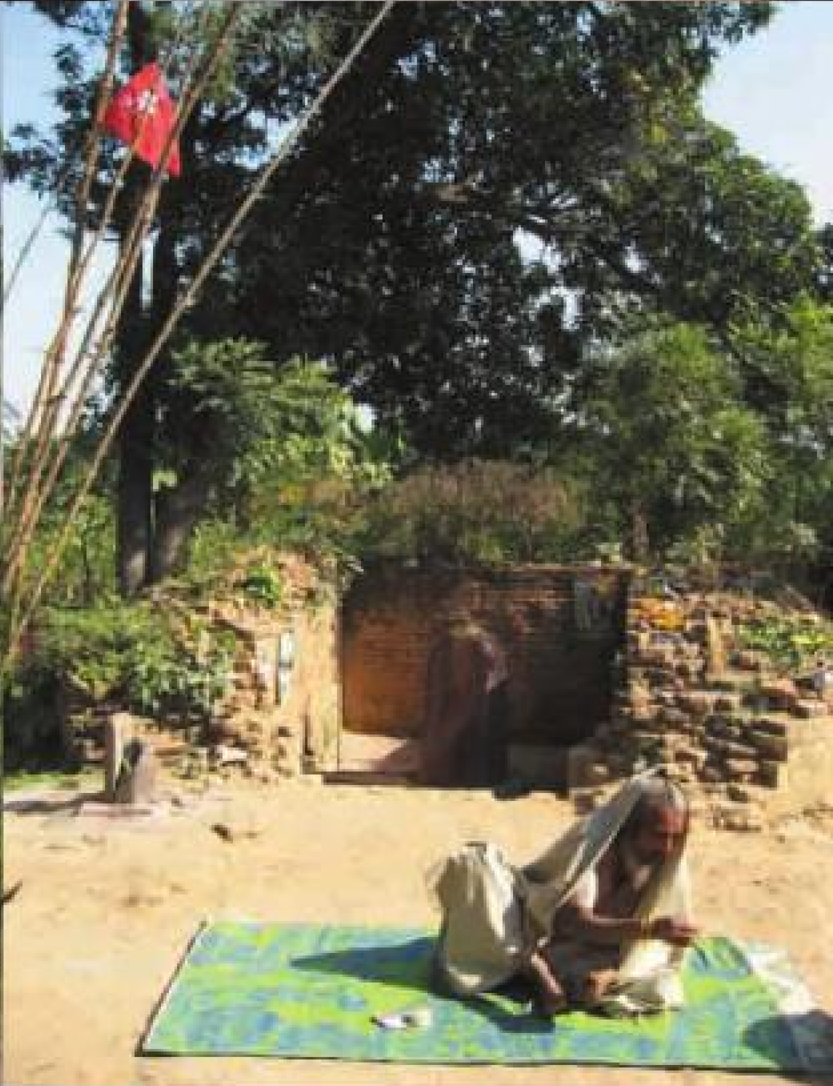


















Kosambakuti

A little to the north of the Bodhi Tree and to the left of the path are the ruins of the Kosambakuti, one of the two favorite resorts of the Buddha at Jetavana. The original structure was probably a small wood and thatch hut in which the Buddha would sleep, meditate and converse with visitors. A relief from the Bhārhut Stupa depicting the purchase of the Jetavana shows both the Kosambakuti and the Gandhakuti, giving some idea of what the two structures may have looked like. The Kosambakuti appears to be a small gabled roofed structure, square in plan with a clay pinnacle on the roof. It was not built of durable material and was later replaced by a brick structure. This replacement, the foundation of which the pilgrim sees today, was 5.75 meters by 5.45 meters, and enclosed a shrine.

Cunningham found a large statue carved out of pink-beige sandstone when he excavated at the Kosambakuti. The inscription on the statue, much damaged, tells us that it was erected at the Kosambakuti by the monk Bala. The statue is now in the Indian Museum in Calcutta. When Huien Tsiang came here, he saw this statue and the Kosambakuti, which was the only structure in the Jetavana not in ruins. Just in front of the Kosambakuti is a long plinth made of brick marking the place where the Buddha would walk up and down in the evenings to take exercise.

The Gandhakuti

Further along the path are the foundations of what was the most celebrated building in the ancient Buddhist world, the Gandhakuti, the Fragrant Hut. The Bhārhut relief indicates that the original Gandhakuti was similar to the Kosambakuti, only larger, and built on a cross plan. The ruins the pilgrim sees today date from the Gupta period and consist of a rectangular terrace with stairs and entrance towards the east, a pavilion and a smaller shrine 2.85 meters square, with walls about 1.8 meters thick. This small shrine is no doubt a later Gandhakuti built over the original one, while the pavilion must have been added at a later date. During his excavations in 1907–8, Vogal dug under the Gandhakuti hoping to expose traces of the original structure, but found nothing.

The name Gandhakuti refers to a type of structure rather than a particular building. The first permanent residence for the Buddha was built at the Jetavana and because people would come making offerings of flowers, sandalwood and perfume, it was given the name Gandhakuti. Soon any structure built for the Buddha or in which he regularly stayed was given the same name, and in later centuries any monastery shrine containing the Buddha statue was likewise designated a Gandhakuti. The ancient commentary tells us that the Jetavana's Gandhakuti was built in the middle of the monastery, a fact verified by archaeologists. Cunningham found a well-constructed road leading from the Gandhakuti

to what was thought to be the front gate of the Jetavana, indicating its central position in the complex.

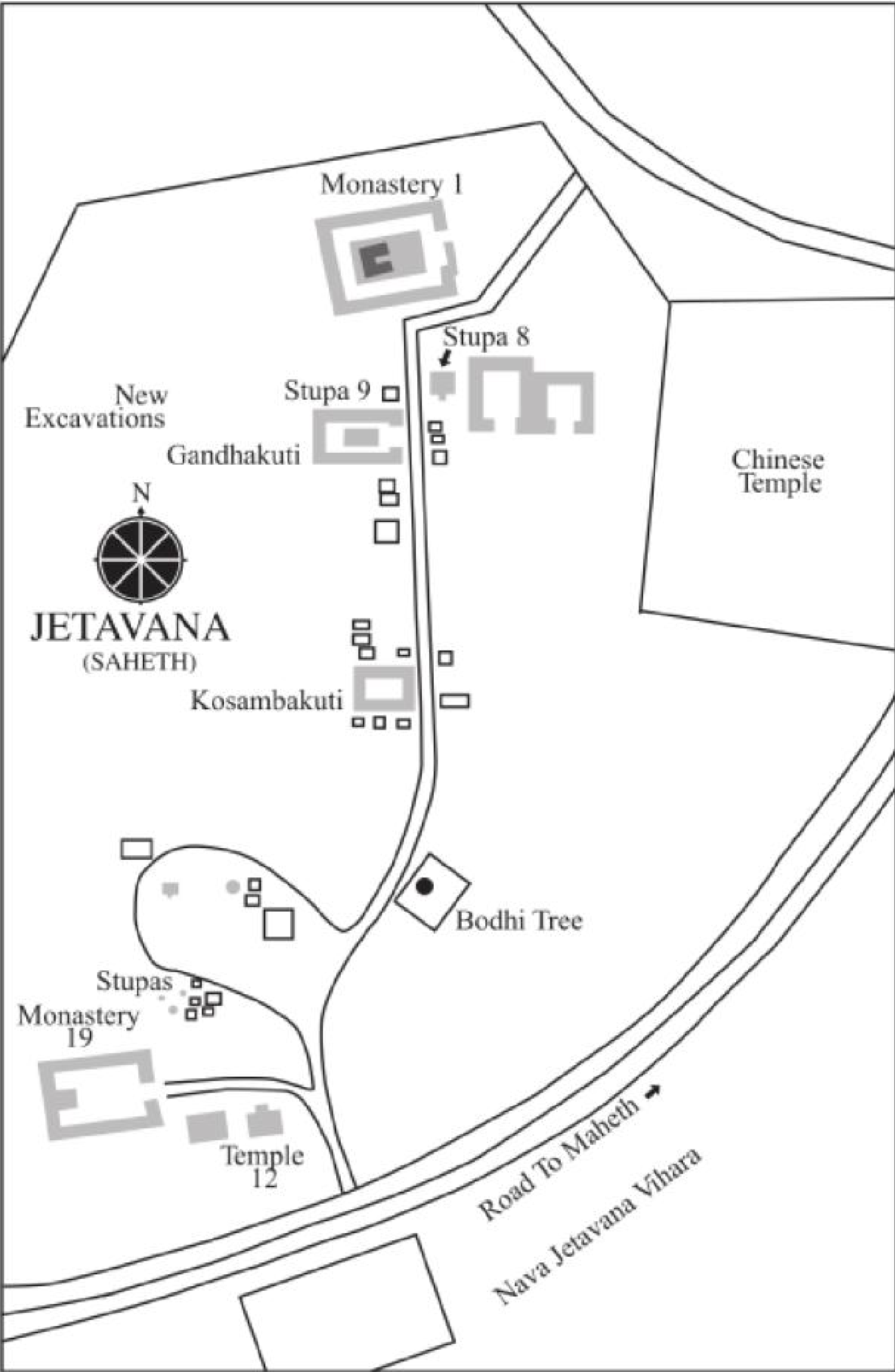
The *Sumangalavilāsinī*, the commentary to the Dīgha Nikāya, details the Buddha's daily routine, and tells us that he would eat and sleep in the Gandhakuti, go forth from there to teach the Dhamma, and in the evening when he needed to stretch his legs, he would walk up and down in front of it. We are also told that the Gandhakuti had a smaller room within, a bathroom, and a 'jeweled staircase' (perhaps meaning that it was richly decorated) leading up to it, where the Buddha would sometimes stand and give a short talk to the assembled monks. The *Sumangalavilāsinī* also tells us that after the Buddha's final Nirvana, people had gathered around the Gandhakuti mourning the Buddha's absence, and Ānanda, on returning to the Jetavana, consoled them with a talk on impermanence. Then he opened the door, dusted the Buddha's chair, swept the faded garlands and dried flower petals from the floor, and put the bed and chair back in their proper place, just as he had done each day during the Buddha's life.

Stupa

Just a little to the north of the Gandhakuti and to the left of the path are the ruins of a small stupa dating from the late Gupta period in which a Buddha statue was found. The statue is small, only 50 centimeters high, and shows the Buddha sitting with his hand in the gesture of giving fearlessness. The circular halo behind the head, of which only parts remain, is ornamented with the design of a full-blown lotus. On either end of the pedestal are two lions with protruding tongues, and between them a relief representing a seated Bodhisattva flanked on either side by two attendants bearing garlands. Along the bottom of the pedestal is an inscription written in late Kushāna characters which reads: 'The pious gift of Sīhadeva, a pravarika from Sāketa.' The style of this statue and the stone from which it is made indicate that it was manufactured in Madhurā, and possibly Sīhadeva went there with the purpose of purchasing the statue, and then brought it to the Jetavana when he came on a pilgrimage. This Buddha statue is now in the Lucknow Museum.

Stupa 8

On the other side of the path from Stupa 9 is another larger stupa. This stupa was originally round, but at a later date, between the 9th and 10th centuries, was rebuilt on a square plan. The second phase of this stupa was found to contain the lower part of a statue: crossed legs sitting on a pedestal. The inscription on the pedestal, written in characters from the early Kushāna period, reads: 'A Bodhisattva (has been set up) in the Jetavana at Sāvatthī (and is) a gift of ... and Sivadhara, Kshatriyas, brothers from Vilishta and sons of Dharmānanda of Madhurā. Versed in the scriptures and (knowing) the unreality of pleasures and the instability


Monastery 1
Stupa 8
Stupa 9
New
Excavations
Gandhakuti
Chinese
Temple
N
JETAVANA
(SAHETH)
Kosambakuti
Bodhi Tree
Stupas
Monastery
19
Temple
12
Road To Maheth
Nava Jetavana Vihara

of life (they) give (this statue) in honor of all the Buddhas, for the welfare of all beings, with special regard to their mother and father and to accumulate merit both in this world and the next. This Bodhisattva was made by Sivamitra, a sculptor from Madhurā.' Below this, the Epitome of the Dhamma is inscribed in characters from the 8th or 9th century CE. The statue seems to have been already broken when it was enshrined in the stupa, and was probably placed there because, whereas it was too badly damaged to be worshipped, it was also considered too sacred to be simply thrown away. The inscription is of interest because it once again is evidence of the importance of Madhurā as a center for the manufacture of Buddhist sculptures. But the inscription is also important because it indicates that it was not just monks but also lay people who were 'versed in the sacred scriptures.'

Monastery 1

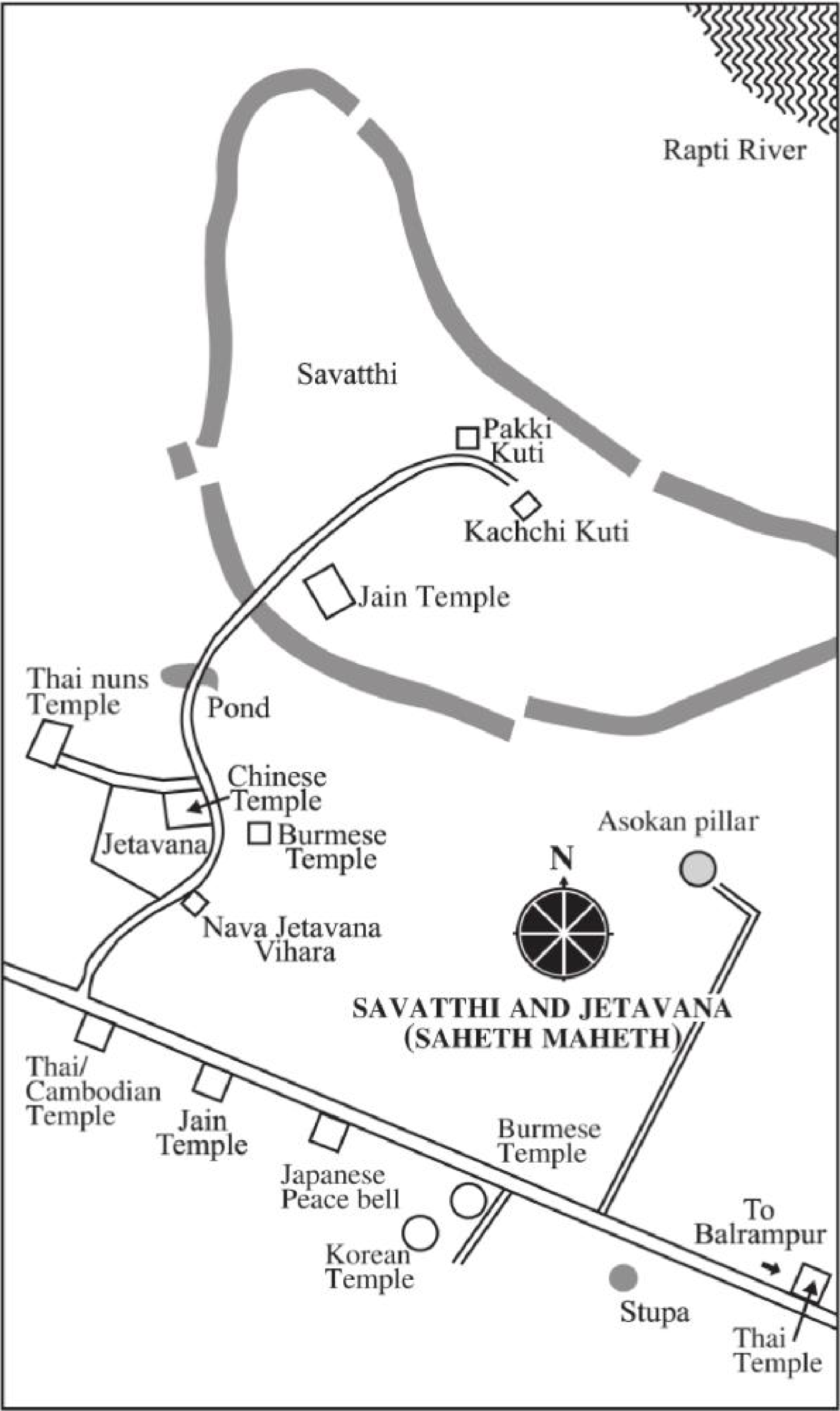
At the northern end of the ruins, this structure is the largest so far discovered at the Jetavana and seems to have been built during the 10th century. The entrance faces the east and leads to a hall with four pillars. The courtyard is surrounded by 35 cells and has a temple in the middle. Like most of the monasteries at the Jetavana, this one contained evidence of having been destroyed by fire.

Pond

Leaving the ruins of the Jetavana by the back gate and proceeding north-west along the road, the pilgrim will soon cross a bridge over a pond. According to the *Udāna*, the Buddha was once going on his almsround when he came upon a group of boys tormenting fish. He stopped and in a gentle and skilful way asked the boys if they liked pain. They answered that they did not and the Buddha then suggested that they should act towards others the way they would like to be treated themselves.[7] The *Udāna* tells us that this encounter took place between Sāvatthī and Jetavana, and as this is the only body of water between the two places, it must have occurred near this pond.

Sāvatthī

Further north along the road is the site of the ancient city of Sāvatthī. The ramparts of the city form a crescent and have a total length of about 5 kilometers. The Rapti River once ran beside the inner curve of the ramparts but is now about 1.5 kilometers further north. The main gate of the city is represented by a gap a short distance to the left of where the modern road cuts through the ramparts. Following the road for some distance, the pilgrim will come to two huge brick structures, the first now called Pakki Kuti, and the second, Kachchi Kuti. Both structures were probably originally stupas which were remodeled at a later period to be used for other purposes. In the rainy season, one can get a good


Rapti River
Savatthi
Pakki Kuti
Kachchi Kuti
Jain Temple
Thai nuns Temple
Pond
Chinese Temple
Burmese Temple
Jetavana
Asokan pillar
N
Nava Jetavana Vihara
SAVATTHI AND JETAVANA (SAHETH MAHETH)
Thai/ Cambodian Temple
Jain Temple
Japanese Peace bell
Burmese Temple
Korean Temple
Stupa
To Balrampur
Thai Temple

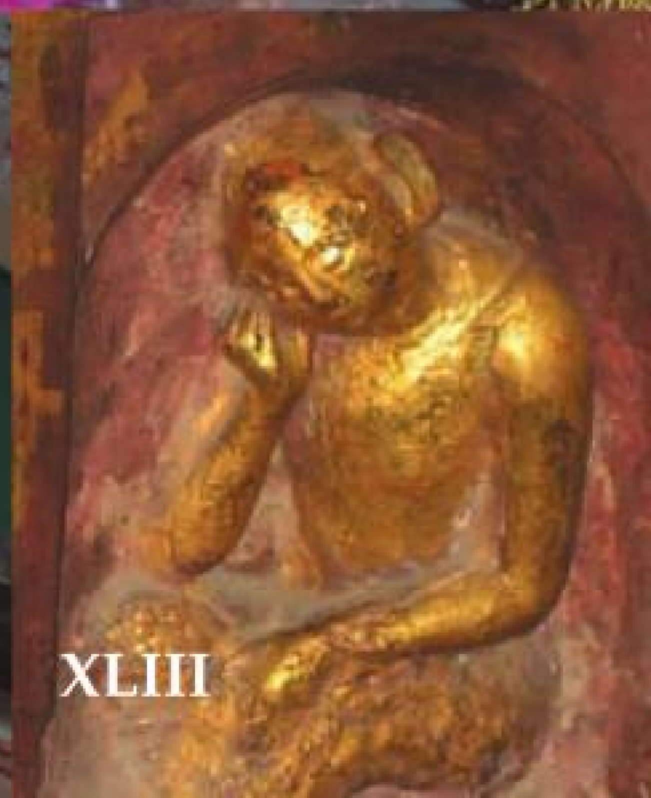
view of the Himalayas from the top of the Kachchi Kuti.

How to Get There

Sāvatthī, called by the locals either Shrāvasti or Saheth Maheth, is about 17 kilometers from Balrumpur and can be reached from there by bus or horse-drawn carriage. Balrumpur can be easily reached by train from either Lucknow or Gorakhpur. Regular taxis also go from Lucknow to Balrumpur passing by Sāvatthī.

Kusināra





Kusināra

Kusināra

Then Ānanda said to the Lord: 'Lord, do not pass away into final Nirvana in this wattle-and-daub town, this jungle town, this town in the woods.[1]

In the last year of his life the Buddha set out from Rājagaha and headed north on what was to be his final journey. He passed through Nālandā, Patāligāma (Patna) and Vesālī, probably with the intention of visiting Kapilavatthu once more before his death. Being old and weak, his progress must have been difficult and slow. He said of himself: 'I am now old, worn out, full of years, one who has traversed life's path, being eighty years old. I have reached the end of my life. Just as an old cart can only be kept going by being held together with straps, so too, the Tathāgata's body can only be kept going by bandaging it up.'[2]

The Buddha and the monks who accompanied him passed through Bhandagāma (not yet identified), Hatthigāma (Hathikhala, near Hathua), Ambagāma (Amaya, 10 kilometers south-west of Tamkuhi), Jambugāma (Jamunahi, 13 kilometers north-west of Hathikhala) and Bhoganagara (Bodraon, 10 kilometers west of Amaya and Fazilnagar in Deoria district) before arriving at Pāvā. Here the smith Cunda gave the Buddha his last meal, after which 'the Lord was attacked by a severe sickness with bloody diarrhea and sharp and deadly pain.'[3] Later, the Buddha told Ānanda to visit Cunda again and, lest he be plagued by remorse, tell him that to offer a Buddha his last meal is a most auspicious act.[4]

After recovering his strength, the Buddha continued some distance to where he met Pukkusa, who offered him a set of robes woven from golden thread. When Ānanda put the robe on the Buddha's aged, sickly body, the body glowed with such a radiance that the golden robe appeared dull by comparison.[5] The party crossed the Hiraññavati River (now a small stream called Hirakinari) and arrived in Kusināra (Kasiā) which despite being the principal town of the Mallas, was only a small place. This was not the Buddha's first visit to Kusināra. During several previous visits, he had preached the Kusināra Suttas and the Kinti Sutta[6] and so enthusiastic and so numerous were the disciples he made that the Mallas council passed a resolution that anyone not welcoming the Buddha on his arrival in the town should be fined.[7]

Now he had returned, and the Mallas, hearing that he was about to die, came in crowds to the sal grove where he lay to see him for what they knew was to be the last time. It so happened that Subhadda, a wandering ascetic, was in the district and he heard that Gotama, the famous teacher whom he had heard much about but never met, was to

die that night, and so he hurried to the sal grove hoping to ask him some questions. When he tried to approach the Buddha, Ānanda firmly held him back, saying that the teacher was tired. When the Buddha saw what was happening, he called Subhadda to him, and though he had only hours to live, taught him the Dhamma.[8] Some months before, the Buddha had said that even if he was so old that he had to be carried about on a litter, he would still have the energy to teach the Dhamma, and now, as he lay dying at Kusināra, he was true to his word.[9] Later, taking the instructions he had received to heart and meditating diligently, Subhadda attained enlightenment.

As the end drew near, the Buddha gave some last instructions on practical matters, and then reminded those gathered around that they could still practice the Dhamma even though he would not be there to guide them: 'Ānanda, you may think: "The Teacher's instruction has ceased, now we have no teacher! " But it should not be seen like this. Let the Dhamma and the discipline that I have taught and explained to you be your teacher after my passing.'[10] Then the Buddha uttered his last words: 'Now, monks, I say to you, all conditioned things are subject to decay, strive on with diligence.'[11] 'Those who were not yet enlightened wept and cried, saying: "Too soon has the Lord passed away, too soon has the Happy One passed away, too soon has the Eye of the World closed." Others remained calm and composed, reminding the others with both their words and example of what the Buddha had taught: "Friends, enough of your weeping and crying! Has not the Lord already told you that all things that are pleasant and delightful are changeable, subject to separation and to becoming other?" '[12] Then the monks spent the rest of the night discussing the Dhamma. Over the next few days, the Mallas made elaborate preparations for the cremation of the Buddha's body, and then on the seventh day the body was taken out of the town to the Makuta Bandhana Shrine and cremated. Because of the important events that took place here, Kusināra must have attracted pilgrims and become a center of pilgrimage quite early.

At the time Huien Tsiang visited Kusināra, many of its monasteries and temples were in ruins, perhaps due to a period of political disorder. He saw a temple with a reclining statue of the Buddha in it. Behind it was a stupa, which although ruined, was still 61 meters high, and in front of it, a huge pillar. There were smaller stupas marking Cunda's house and also where Subhadda attained Nirvana. A few decades after Huien Tsiang's visit his countryman I Tsing came to Kusināra and found over a 100 monks residing there. He also mentioned that up to 500 monks would be fed and accommodated there during the pilgrimage season. When the Korean pilgrim Hye Ch'o arrived in about 725 CE, the place seems to have declined again: 'After a month's journey, I arrived at the country of Kusināra. This is where the Buddha entered Nirvana. The city is desolate and no people live there. The stupa was built at the site

where the Buddha entered Nirvana. There is a meditation master there who keeps the place clean. Every year, on the eighth day of the eighth month, monks, nuns, clergy and laymen hold a great assembly of worship here. Numerous banners appear in the sky and are seen by the people. On the same day, many people resolve their mind for the Dhamma.' He also mentions that lone pilgrims travelling in the area were sometimes attacked by tigers or rhinoceros.

After Hye Ch'o's visit, historical and literary sources are silent about Kusināra, and it is possible that it had ceased to function as a center of Buddhism even before the Islamic invasion. After Kusināra's decline, the village that grew up around it came to be called Kusia, almost the only hint of the true significance of the ruins around the village. In 1854, H.H. Wilson casually suggested that Kusia might be Kusināra, and intrigued by the suggestion, Cunningham visited the site in 1861–62, going away convinced that it was correct, though he had no definite evidence. In 1876, Cunningham's assistant Carlleyle made extensive excavations around Kusia, and though his discovery of the large reclining Buddha strengthened the conjecture that the site was in fact Kusināra, he still found no inscription to prove it. It was not until excavations between 1904 and 1912 brought to light seals and a copper-plate inscription mentioning a Mahāparinirvāna Vihāra and a Parinirvāna Cetiya, that the identification of Kusia with Kusināra was proved conclusively. In the 1900s, a Burmese monk, Venerable U. Chandramani, came to Kusināra on a pilgrimage and decided to stay. He built a small temple, and in the years that followed looked after the pilgrims who started to come. Since then, a village has grown up around the ruins and today the pilgrim can wander in the well-kept gardens, worship at the Nirvana Temple, and contemplate that 'here the Tathāgata attained final Nirvana.'

What to See

Nirvana Temple

In the middle of the park, surrounded by ruins, is the modern Nirvana Temple built by the Indian government in 1956. Excavation showed that the original temple on the site consisted of an oblong hall and antechamber with its entrance facing the west. Large numbers of bricks with curved surfaces found amongst the rubbish indicated that the temple originally had a barrel-vaulted roof not unlike that on the modern temple.

The temple enshrines a recumbent Buddha statue 6.1 meters in length and carved out of a single block of reddish sandstone. The Buddha statue lies peacefully on its right side with the head towards the north, the right hand is placed under the head, and the left hand rests on the thigh. The plinth on which the statue lies has three small niches on its west side, each containing a small figure. The figure on the left is that of

a woman with long hair, obviously distraught and probably representing the grief of the Mallas. The figure in the center shows a monk meditating with his back to the viewer. The figure on the right is again of a monk, but this time he rests his head on his right hand overcome with grief. These two figures no doubt represent the monks who remained calm at the Buddha's final Nirvana and those who cried. Just below the figure in the center is an inscription, partly damaged, which reads: 'This image is the meritorious gift of Haribala, a monk from the Great Monastery and was fashioned by Din ...'

The statue is the one seen by Huien Tsiang during his visit, and judging by the style of the letters in the inscription dates from the 5th century CE. When Carlleyle excavated the Nirvana Temple in 1876, he found this Buddha statue completely smashed and evidence of attempts to repair it. It is interesting to note that this is one of the very few representations of the Buddha's final Nirvana ever found in northern India.

The Nirvana Stupa

Directly behind the Nirvana Temple is a stupa built over the very place where the Buddha attained final Nirvana between the twin sal trees. Like most stupas, this one consists of several stupas, one inside the other. Inside the earliest stupa, which was perfectly preserved, were found pieces of charcoal and blackened earth, no doubt from the funeral pyre. The stupa was enlarged in about the 5th century CE by the same Haribala who donated the statue within the Nirvana Temple.

Matha Kaur Shrine

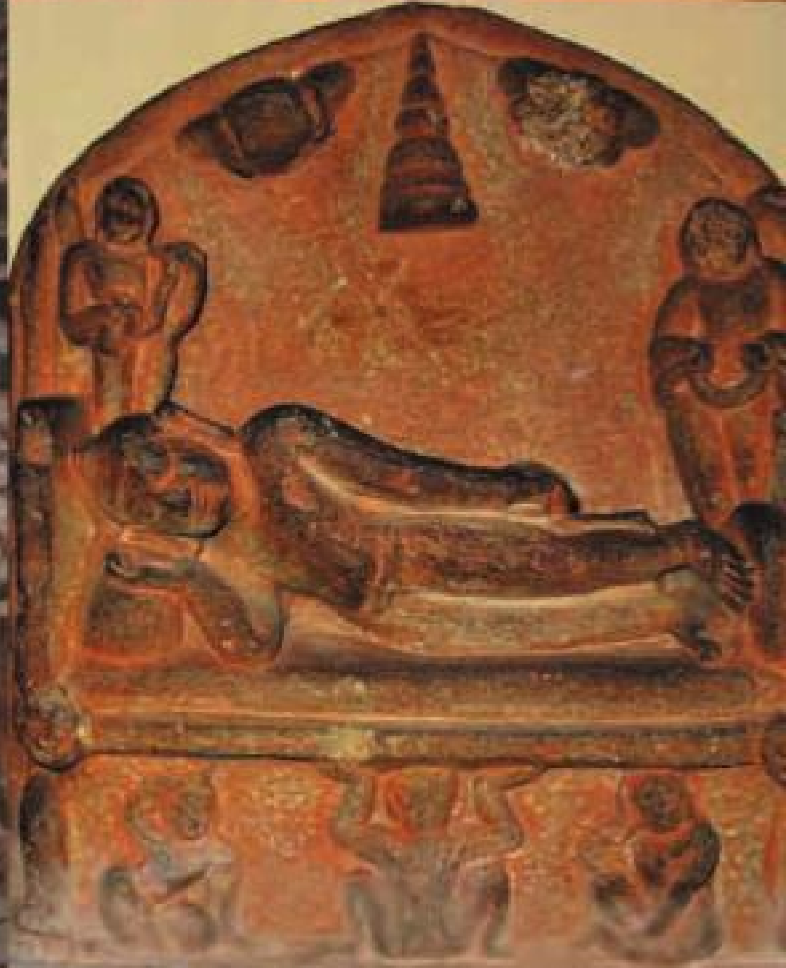
Leaving the archaeological park and proceeding south down the main road, the pilgrim will see a modern shrine at the turn in the road. The shrine was built by Burmese pilgrims in 1927 to shelter a large Buddha statue found on the site. The statue, when found during Carlleyle's excavations, was broken into two and must have originally been in the shrine of a large monastery, the foundations of which can still be seen. The statue itself is 3.05 meters in height and shows the Buddha in the earth touching gesture. On the base of the statue is a much worn inscription indicating that the sculpture dates from the 10th or 11th century. The origin of the name, Matha-Kaur, is something of a mystery. Cunningham thought it might be a contraction of 'The Dead Prince' ('*mata*' dead, and '*kumāra*' prince).

The Cremation Stupa

Continuing about one and a half kilometers further down the road, the pilgrim will come to the stupa marking the place where the Buddha's body was cremated. The stupa's drum was originally 34.14 meters in

Kusināra



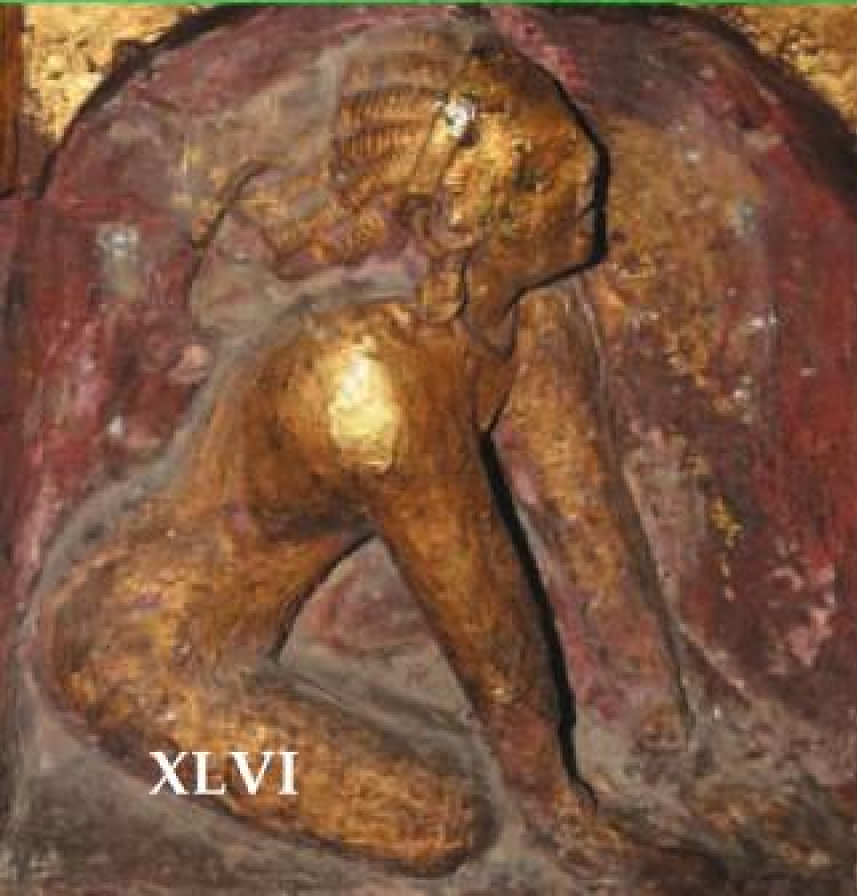






Kusināra







diameter and sat on a round plinth 47.24 meters in diameter.

How to Get There

Kusināra (now called Kasiā) is 55 kilometers east of Gorakhpur and is easily reached by road. Alternatively, one can come via Deoria which is 35 kilometers from Kusināra and which is connected to Vārānasi by train.

Around Kusināra

Pajilnagar

About 18 kilometers south of Kusināra in the village of Pajilnagar are the remains of what appear to be a large stupa. It has been suggested that Pajilnagar is Pāvā where the Buddha had his last meal and where a stupa was later built to enshrine a one eighth portion of his ashes[13]. However, according to the *Paramatthadīpanī*, Pāvā was 3 *gavutas* or approximately 6 miles from Kusināra and the stupa built over Cunda's house which Huien Tsiang saw was only 3 li from Kusināra. Pāvā was the last town the Buddha stopped at before arriving at Kusināra and it seems unlikely that he could have walked 18 kilometers in one day, especially as he was so ill. Excavations are still in progress at Pajilnagar and it will be necessary to wait until they are completed and the report is published before there is certainty about the true identity of this stupa.

How to Get There

To get to Pajilnagar head, south-east from Kusināra, proceed through the town until the bridge and take the first turn on the left. Continue through the bazaar and again take the first turn on the left. Local buses ply between the two towns.

DON

Let stupas be put up far and wide that all may see and grow in faith[1]

Of the first stupas ever built, eight enshrined the Buddha's ashes, one the vessel in which his ashes had been collected and measured out from, and one the charcoal from the pyre that had consumed his body. According to the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, this situation came about thus: As word spread that the Buddha had died, representatives from several kingdoms and clans began arriving in Kusināra to claim the mortal remains. The Sakyans wanted some because, as their representative said, 'The Tathāgata was the greatest of our tribe.' The envoy of King Ajātasattu said that his master was entitled to the relics because he was of the warrior caste and so was the Buddha. This was a spurious argument but Ajātasattu was the strongest and most belligerent monarch of the time so his demands had to be taken seriously. The Mallas of Kusināra, perhaps arguing from the standpoint of possession being nine tenths of the law, said, 'The Tathāgata attained final Nirvana in the precincts of our town and we will not give up his bones.'[2] In all, eight claimants were involved in this rather unseemly dispute.

It so happened that a respected brahmin named Dona was staying in Kusināra at the time. This was probably not his real name but one by which he later came to be known. The Pali word *dona* means a measuring cup or vessel. Dona had met the Buddha once some years previously. While traveling on the road between Ukkatthā and Setabbya, Dona had seen some footprints in the dust and noticing their auspicious shape decided to follow them. Soon he came to the Buddha sitting at the foot of a tree, 'pleasing to the eye, inspiring faith, with calm senses, tranquil mind and utterly composed like a perfectly trained elephant.' Filled with awe Dona asked, 'Will you be a god?'

'No I will not,' replied the Buddha.

'Will you be an angel?'

'No.'

'Will you be a spirit ?'

'No I will not.'

'Will you be a human being?'

'I will not be a human being either.'

'Then what will you be?' Dona cried in bewilderment. 'Consider me a Buddha' came the reply.[3] The two men sat and talked and by the time the conversation had finished Dona had attained the first stage of enlightenment.

Dona apparently had the trust of all those gathered at Kusināra and so it was agreed that he should divide the relics according to what he

thought fair. As a reward for his services he was given the vessel in which the relics had been held and from which he had measured them out. He received it with gratitude and announced that he would enshrine it in a stupa. The division having been made to everyone's satisfaction, an envoy from the Moriyas of Pipphalivana turned up and demanded a portion and Dona came to the rescue again, suggesting that the latecomers be given the ashes from the funeral pyre. This was done and thus the first ten Buddhist stupas came to be built.

In the Mahaparinibbāna Sutta, Dona is portrayed as a skilled arbitrator. 'The Buddha's teaching is about forbearance and it is not right that strife should come from sharing out the remains of this best of men. Let us all be combined in harmony and peace. In the spirit of friendship let the remains be divided into eight.'[4] In his *Buddhacarita*, Asvaghosa uses this incident to put into Dona's mouth a long and moving peon to peace, compromise and common sense. In later literature Dona is represented as something of a trickster determined to keep some of the relics for himself. According to the *Sumangalavilāsanī* while he was dividing out the relics he waited until no one was watching and then slipped the Buddha's right eye tooth into his turban. Another legend says he surreptitiously smeared the inside of the measuring vessel with honey and kept for himself the relics that stuck to it.

What to See

Dona's Stupa

The stupa which Dona had built to enshrine the measuring vessel was a popular destination with pilgrims in ancient times. It is mentioned in the *Divyāvadāna*, written in about the 2nd century CE, and in several other works. Huien Tsiang saw the stupa and although it was already in ruins he was told that it still sometimes emitted a brilliant light. He was also told that it had once been enlarged by King Asoka. Today, Dona's stupa is a low grassy mound with a Hindu temple on its top situated on the edge of the small village of Don. Within living memory the core of the stupa rose quite high but it has since collapsed and its bricks have been used to build the temple. At the side of the stupa is a statue of Tārā delicately carved out of black stone and dating from about the 9th century CE.

How to Get There

The nearest large town to Don is Siwan, about 95 kilometers south-east of Kusināra and about the same distance north-west of Hajipur, just across the river from Patna. Both roads are in very bad condition. From Siwan proceed west and just before Mairwa turn south on the road to Darauli. Don is about 8 kilometers from the turnoff. Siwan district is particularly lawless so try to avoid being on the roads during the evening.

ABBREVIATIONS

A	Anguttara Nikāya
ABIA	*Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology*
ARASI	*Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*
D	Dīgha Nikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada
Dhp-a	Dhammapada Atthakathā
J-a	Jātaka Atthakathā
JBORS	*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*
M	Majjhima Nikāya
MASI	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*
S	Samyutta Nikāya
Sn	Sutta Nipāta
Th	Theragāthā
Thī	Therīgāthā
Ud	Udāna
Vin	Vinaya

Notes

Introduction

1. D II 141. **2.** A I 35. **3.** A IV 225. **4.** Vin IV 97. **5.** D II 72. **6.** D III 83; A I 145. **7.** A I 145. **8.** Before the Second World War, the renowned Thai monk, Lungpo In, made a pilgrimage on foot to India going through Upper Burma and Assam. **9.** D II 43. **10.** D II 167. **11.** Vin IV 39. **12.** Vin V 146. **13.** Sn 35. **14.** M III 156. **15.** D III 143.

1. Lumbinī

1. Sn 683. **2.** M III 124. **3.** Dhp-a 25.

2. Kapilavatthu

1. S V 369. **2.** Vin V 80. **3.** M I 108. **4.** M I 354. **5.** A I 219. **6** In 1978 the author had the privilege of accompanying these sacred relics for a part of their tour of Sri Lanka.

3. Bodh Gayā

1. M I 167. **2.** J-a IV 233; **3.** Sn 425–49. **4.** Vin IV 24-34. **5.** J-a IV 233. **6** J-a I 78. **7.** J-a I 78. **8.** J-a I 77. **9** Vin IV 7. **10.** Vin IV 3. **11.** Vin I 3. **12.** J-a I 70. **13.** M I 214.

4. Sārnāth

1. M I 171. **2.** Vin IV 8. **3.** M I 171. **4.** M I 172. **5.** S V 420. **6** S II 67. **7.** M IV 20. **8.** E.g. A I 109; A I 280; S I 105; S IV 383. **9** M I 226; A V 323; A V 33; A II 345. **10.** D II 58; A III 417. **11.** M I 450.

5. Gayā

1. Vin IV 35. **2.** M I:39. **3.** Vin IV:34. **4.** Ud 7. **5.** Vin V:198. **6.** Sn 270–273.

6. Rājagaha

1. M III 54. **2.** D II 116. **3.** Sn 408. **4.** Sn 414. **5.** Vin IV 34. **6.** Vin IV 35. **7.** Vin IV 39. **8.** Vin V 193. **9** Vin V 194. **10.** Vin IV 39. **11.** Vin IV 39. **12.** S V 447. **13.** M I 392; M I 145; M I 484. **14.** M I 299; M III 129. **15.** Vin I 108. **16.** A V 196; M III 192. **17.** S V 79. **18.** Ud 4. *Pipphali* is another name for the Bodhi tree (Ficus religiosa). **19.** Vin I 159. **20.** *Mahāvastu*, I 7ff. **21.** Vin V 286. **22.** S I 208. **23.**Vin V 190. **24.** D I 47. **25.** M I 369; A IV 222. **26.** E.g. M I 192; S II 185. **27.** M I 497; S V 233. **28.** Vin IV 287. **29.** S III 124. **30.** J-a V 125. **31.** D II 26. **32.** Vin I 34. **33.** Ud 39. **34.** According to both Buddhist and Jain sources Mahāvīra, known in the Tipitaka as Nigantha Nātaputta, died at a place called Pāvā (D III 210). Jain tradition identifies Pāvā with Pāwapuri and the beautiful white marble temple there commemorates Mahāvīra's death. According to the Tipitaka however, Pāvā was a village of the Mallas and the Buddha passed through it just before arriving at Kusināra (D II 26).

7. Nālandā

1. D I 211; **2.** M I 372, D I 211; **3.** D I 1, M I 414; **4.** After his conquest of Bengal in 1199, Muhammad Bakhtiyar decided to invade Tibet. Weather eventually forced him to retreat, his whole army perished while trying to cross a flooded river, and he himself died of shame soon after. Another account claims he was assassinated.

8. Patna

1. D II 87. **2.** M II 163. **3.** S V 14–6, 171–73. **4.** M I 255. **5.** S IV 261. **6.** S V 163. **7.** See also Ud 92.

9. Cāmpā

1. D I 111. **2.** J-a IV 32. **3.** D I 111; A IV 168; M I 339. Another place in Anga visited by the Buddha was Bhaddiya now the village of Bhadariya about 8 km south of Bhagalpur. The most easterly place that the Buddha went which can still be identified was Kajangala, now Kankjol, 18 km south of Rājmahal and right on the West Bengal border. There are no Buddhist ruins or antiquities in either of these villages. **4.** Vin IV 133; D III 272. **5.** S I 195. **6.** Vin IV 311. **7.** *Buddhavamsa* 37.

10. Vesālī

1. Vin IV 268. **2.** D II 74. **3.** J-a I 504. **4.** D I 235; D I 150; M I 482; Sn 222–38. **5.** D II 96. **6.** Thī 252–70. **7.** D II 122. **8.** Vin V 303. **9.** D II 164.

11. Kesariya

1. Spelled as Kesamutta ("Shedded Hair") in the Burmese Pali tradition, but a town called Kesarapura is mentioned in Monier William's *Sanskrit English Dictionary*. Huien Tsiang calls the place Kia-shi-po-lo (Keshapura). Cf Pāṭaliputra (Patna). (BPS editor) **2.** A I 187. **3.** A I 188.

12. Kosambī

1. Vin I 277; Sn 1010-1013. **2.** Vin I 290. **3.** S IV 437. **4.** Vin V 291. **5.** M III 153. For details of the quarrel at Kosambī, see J-a III 486. **6.** M III 156. **7.** Ud 41. See also Dhp-a I 56. **8.** M III 152; M I 320; D I 159. **9.** eg. S IV 113. **10.** The Burmese version of the Buddhavamsa reads Makulapabbata ("knob-shaped mountain"). The source for this identification with Kosambī is Nārada Thera's *Buddha and his Teaching*, however no information could be traced in the Pali texts that there is a mountain with this name near Kosambī, and the identification seems conjectural. Huien Tsiang only mentions "a stone dwelling of a venomous nāga," which the Tathāgata subdued, located 8–9 *li* south-west of the city. "By the side of it is a *stupa* built by Ashoka-raja, about 200 feet high." (BPS editor). **11.** M I 39. **11.** Vin III 11.

13. Madhurā

1. A III 256. **2.** M II 83.

14. Gurpa

1. Th 1064.

16. Barabar and Nāgārjuni Hills

1. Sn 1013.

17. Sāvatthī

1. *Paramatthajotika* 110. **2.** Vin V 153–57. **3.** Vin V 158. **4.** Vin V 159. **5.** M II 98. **6.** J-a IV 228. **7.** Ud 51.

18. Kusināra

1. D II 146. **2.** D II 100. **3.** D II 127. **4.** D II 136. **5.** D II 134. **6.** A 1 274; A V 79; M 11 238. **7.** Vin IV 246. **8.** D II 149. **9.** M I 83. **10.** D II 154. **11.** D II 156. **12.** D II 158. **13.** D.II,167.

19. Don

1. D II 166. **2.** D II 165. **3.** A II 36.

Bibliography

Abu Inam. *Sir Alexander Cunningham and the Beginnings of Indian Archaeology*, Dacca, 1966.

Bapat, P.V. (editor). *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Delhi, 1956.

Barua, Benimadhab. *Gaya and Buddha Gaya: Early History of the Holy Land,* Calcutta ,Vol. I, 1931; Vol. II, 1934.

Beal, Samuel. *The Life of Huien Tsiang, by Shaman Hwui Li,* Delhi, 1986.

–*Si-Yu-Ki, Buddhist Records of the Western World,* Delhi, 1981.

Bhattacharya, N.N. *The Geographical Dictionary, Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi, 1991.

Bloch, Theodore. 'Excavations at Rajgir', *ARASI* 1905-06.

Chakrabarti, Dilip, K. *Archaeological Geography of the Ganga Plain,* Delhi, 2001.

Chimpa, L. and Chattopadhyaya, A. *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India*, Calcutta, 1970.

Cunningham, Alexander. *Mahabodhi, or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya*, London, 1892.

Chandra, G.C. 'Excavation at Nalanda', *ARASI*, 1937.

Dhammika, S. *The Edicts of King Asoka,* Kandy, 1993.

–*Navel of the Earth : The History and Significance of Bodh Gaya,* Singapore, 1996.

–'Where Mahākassapa Waits', *The Middle Way,* February, 1998.

–*A Guide to Bodh Gaya,* Bodh Gaya, 2006.

Dutt, Sukumar. *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India,* London, 1962.

Fabri, C.L. 'Identification of the Site of Kausambi', *ABIA*, 1926.

–'The Wooden Walls of Pataliputra', *ABIA* , 1928.

Gosh, A. *Nalanda,* New Delhi, 1965.

Hargreaves, H. 'Excavations at Sarnath', *ARASI*, 1914-15.

Lahiri, Latika. *Chinese Monks in India,* Delhi, 1986.

Law, Bimala Churn. 'Sravasti in Ancient India', *MASI* , No. 50, 1935.

–'Rajagriha in Ancient Literature', *MASI* , No. 58, 1938.

–*India as Described in the Early Text of Buddhism and Jainism*, London, 1941,

–*Historical Geography of Ancient India,* Paris, 1954.

–*Geography of Early Buddhism,* New Delhi, 1979.

Legge, James. *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms, Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of His Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399–414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline*, New York, 1965.

Majumdar, Nair Gopal. 'Explorations at Lauriya-Nandangarh', *ARAS1*, 1935-36.

Marshall, John H. 'Chandragupta's Palisaded Capitol', *The Illustrated London News*, March 24, 1928.

–'Rajagriha and its Remains', *ARASI*, 1905-06.
Marshall, John H. and Konow, Sten. 'Sarnath', *ARASI*, 1906-07.
–'Excavations at Sarnath, 1908', *ARASI*, 1907-08.
Mookerji, Radhakumud. 'The University of Nalanda', *JBORS*, Vol. 30, 1944.
–*Asoka*, Delhi, 1962.
Mitra, D. *Buddhist Monuments*, Calcutta, 1971.
Nazim, M. 'Excavation at Nalanda', *ARASI*, 1936-37.
Patil, D.R. *Kusinagara*, New Delhi, 1957.
Peiris, W. *Edwin Arnold: Brief Account of his Life and Contribution to Buddhism*, Kandy, 1970.
Prasad, R.C. *Archaeology of Champa and Vikramasila*, Delhi, 1987.
Roerich, George. *Biography of Dharmasvamin*, Patna, 1956.
Sangharakshita. *Anagarika Dharmapala, A Biographical Sketch*, Kandy, 1964.
Sarasvati, Sarasi Kumar and Sarkar, Kshitish Chaudra. *Kurkihar, Gaya and Bodh Gaya*, Rajshahi, 1936.
Sastri, H. 'Excavations at Kasia', *ARASI*, 1911-12.
Sen, D.N. 'Sites in Rajgir Associated with Buddha and His Disciples', *JBORS*, Vol. 4, 1918.
Sharma, G.R. 'Excavations at Kausambi 1949-1955', *ABIA*, Vol. 16, 1948-53.
Sinha, K.K. *Excavations at Sravasti*, 1959, Varanasi, 1967.
Srivastava, K.M. *Discovery of Kapilavastu*, New Delhi, 1986.
Takakusu, J. *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago AD 671–695 by I Tsing*, Delhi, 1966.
Vogel, Jean. P. *Archaeological Museum at Mathura*, Delhi, 1971.
Yang Han Sung, Jan Yun Hua, Shotaro I., Preston L. *The Hye Ch'o Diary–Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India*, Seoul, no date.

Description of Plates

Introduction

Plate I

Top left: Statue of Anāgārika Dharmapāla at Sārnāth. *Top right:* Sir Edwin Arnold. *Centre left to right:* Anāgārika Dharmapāla. King Mindon Min. King Mindon Min ordering the inscription of the slabs with the Tipiṭaka text recited and agreed upon at the Fifth Council (depicted by the monks in the background). *Centre:* General Cunningham. *Bottom left:* Patna Museum. *Bottom right:* Hsiang Tsiang.

Plate II

Top left: Piphrāva Buddha relics at the National Museum, New Delhi. *Top right:* Thai relic house at Kusināra. It houses the part of the Piphrāva relics given to the Thai king in the 1950s. *Centre right:* The relic in the Thai relic house at Kusināra. *Bottom left:* The relic casket with the Vesālī Buddha relics at the Patna Museum. It is not certain whether there are actually relics in the casket because there is a report that the governor of Patna shows the Vesālī relics to visitors. *Bottom right:* Piphrāva relic caskets, with the relics in front. At the National Museum, New Delhi.

Plate III

Top left: Earth-witnessing Buddha statue at the Patna Museum. From the Pāla period. *Top right:* Statue of Maitreya from Vishnupur, Gaya, at the Patna Museum. *Bottom left:* Bronze standing Buddha at the Patna Museum. *Bottom right:* Statue of six armed Avalokitesvara at the Indian Museum, Kolkata.

Plate IV

Top left: Gandhāra style meditating Bodhisattva statue at the Indian Museum, Kolkata *Top right:* Sārnāth style Buddha statue. Gupta period. At the Indian Museum. The Buddha makes the Gesture of Turning the Wheel of Dhamma, symbolizing his first sermon. Note the five bhikkhus and the two deer around the Dhamma wheel at the base of the statue. *Centre left*: Standing Buddha. Kushāna period. At the Government museum in Madhurā. *Centre centre:* Sitting Buddha with his hand up in the fearless gesture. Note the two meditating monks and the lions at the base of the statue. Kushāna period. At the Government museum in Madhurā. *Centre right:* Gandhāra style standing Buddha at the Indian Museum, Kolkata *Bottom left:* Standing Gandhāra style bronze Buddha image at the National Museum, New Delhi. *Bottom right:* Earth-witnessing Buddha at the Patna Museum. Pāla period

Lumbinī

Plate V

Asoka Pillar next to place where the Buddha was born. The tank where Queen Mahāmāyā bathed.

Plate VI

Top left. Asoka pillar. *Top right:* Statue depicting the Bodhisattva making seven steps shortly after he was born. His right hand is raised in assertion of the fact that he will be a Buddha. *Centre left:* Nepalese relief at Lumbinī depicting the birth of the Bodhisattva. *Centre right:* Bodhi tree with Hindu shrine and feeding squirrels.*Bottom left:* Relief depicting the elephant dream of Queen Mahāmāyā (lying), which indicated that she had become pregnant of the Bodhisattva (left), and the birth of the Bodhisattva (right). In the centre the Bodhisattva standing on a lotus makes his assertion. A servant is massaging the feet of the queen. At the Sārnāth Museum. *Bottom right:* A Greek influenced Gandhāra relief depicting the birth. At the Indian Museum in Kolkata.

Kapilavatthu

Plate VII

Top: Remains of a stupa said to be on the site of the Nigrodhārāma, west of Lumbinī. *Centre:* A three part relief from Amarāvatī, Andhra Pradesh, depicting the Bodhisattva in Tāvatiṃsa Heaven (left & centre) and the elephant dream of Queen Māyā, left. The left part depicts the Bodhisattava on his throne in Tāvatiṃsa heaven. The central part depicts an elephant carried in a festive procession. It is the elephant one which Queen Mahāmāyā saw in her dream (depicted in the top of the third part of the relief). In the top right corner the Bodhisattva is holding up his hand in gesture of weariness and refusal of saṃsāra. At the Indian Museum.
Bottom: Remains of the Sakyan's Stupa at Kapilavatthu.

Bodh Gaya

Plate VIII

Top: Drawing by William Daniell called *Great Temple at Bodh Gyah*, 1834. *Centre left:* Picture of the temple before the restoration. *Bottom right:* Drawing of the Mahābodhi temple before the restoration, by Sir Charles D'Oyly, 1824. *Bottom left:* Picture of the temple before the restoration.

Plate IX

Mahābodhi Temple with monks worshipping Mahābodhi Tree.

Plate X

Mahābodhi Temple entrance at dusk.

Plate XI

Top left: Sinhalese devotees below the railing around the Mahābodhi Temple. *Bottom right:* Wind chimes in the Mahābodhi Tree.
Centre right: Pāla period statues of the Buddha and Tārā in the first Hindu shrine behind the Buddhapada Temple. *Bottom left:* Statue of female devotee at the base of a pillar. It is of Burmese workmanship and was probably placed by one of the first Burmese missions. *Bottom right:* Devotee worshipping at the Buddha's walking meditation path.

Plate XII

Top left: Devotees walking towards the shrine-room of the Mahābodhi Temple through the gateway. *Top right:* Sinhalese monks worshipping the Buddha image inside the Mahābodhi Temple. The robe wrapped around the image is changed every day. Pilgrims especially bring robes for this purpose, which is considered meritorious. *Bottom left:* Standing Buddha statue in the niche right of the main entrance. Late Gupta period. 7th century CE. *Bottom right:* Statue of Maitreya.

Plate XIII

Top left: Buddhist monks worshipping at the Vajirāsana under the Mahābodhi Tree. The trunk of the tree has been wrapped in a robe. Wrapping robes around Buddha statues, stupas and Bodhi trees is considered meritorious. *Top right:* Votive stupas under the Bodhi Tree.
Centre left: Tibetan monks reciting. To the left and right are votive stupas with Buddha images. *Centre right:* Tibetan monks doing prostrations on planks and mats near the Mahābodhi. *Bottom left:* Chinese (or Korean) nuns worshipping the Mahābodhi Tree. *Bottom right:* Statue of standing Buddha in the niche on the left of the main entrance to the Mahābodhi Temple.

Plate XIV

Top left: Relief from the Bhārhut Stupa, now at the Indian Museum at Kolkata, depicting worshippers at the Vajirāsana and Mahābodhi Tree. The pillar with the elephant at the bottom right is an Asoka Pillar. The figures on top around the Mahābodhi tree are devas. The lower two devas are swinging their garments in the air out of joy and also appear to be whistling. The upper two devas are offering flower garlands to the Bodhi Tree. The female figure at the bottom left is perhaps an attendant holding a whisk. *Top right:* Kumrahar plaque, which depicts the Mahābodhi temple (or perhaps the Mūlagandhakuti at Sārnāth or some other site). At the Patna Museum. *Bottom right:* Gods and men listening to a Dhamma sermon by the Buddha, who is depicted by way of the seat, footprints, and Bodhi tree. Relief from the Bhārhut Stupa. *Centre right:* Worshippers at the Vajirāsana. From pillar at the Mahābodhi temple. *Centre left:* Mahābodhi tree with Vajirāsana. Asoka pillar with elephant on the right. From the Bhārhut Stupa. *Bottom left:* Worship scenes at Vajirāsana. From relief at the Indian Museum at Kolkata.

Plate XV

Top: Tantric female deity Chundā in niche facing river near Mahant's Residence. *Bottom left:* 5th century Kushāna period Buddha image near the courtyard of the Residence. This is the oldest Buddha statue in Bodh Gaya.

Plate XVI

Top: Row of Buddha images in Mahant's Residence courtyard. *Centre right:* Bodhi tree along the (dried up) riverbed near Mahant's Residence. *Centre left:* Footprint of the Buddha in Mahant's Residence courtyard. *Bottom left:* Courtyard of Mahant's Residence. *Bottom right:* Riverside entrance to Mahant's Residence.

Gayā

Plate XVII

Top: Gayasīsa boulder on the Brahmayoni Hill. This the boulder where the Buddha reputedly taught the Fire Sermon to the converted fire ascetics. The Pragbodhi hill range and the Phalgu river can be seen on the background. *Centre left:* The Surjikund Tank. *Centre right:* Gayasīsa with a modern Buddha footprint on the foreground. *Bottom left:* Footprint of Vishnu at the Vishnupada temple, Gayā. Hindu worshippers are making offerings to the footprint. Probably this footprint was earlier worshipped as a Buddha footprint. *Bottom right:* Brahmayoni hill.

Plate XVIII

Top left: Relief from Sāñchī depicting an episode of the life of the Buddha which happened not long after his enlightenment at Uruvelā on the Nerañjarā river and is related in the Mahāvagga (Vin I 23ff). Fire ascetics are preparing and kindling their sacred fires by carrying and cutting wood. The structure in the enclosure might be a beehive or termite mount.

Top right: A great flood at the place where the Buddha was staying near the hermitage of Uruvelakassapa. The Buddha made the water recede around him through psychic power and paced up and down on dry ground, depicted by the narrow slab above the standing ascetics. Uruvelakassapa went to see how the Buddha was doing by boat. The seat under the tree depicts the Buddha and marks the success of the Buddha in converting the ascetics after this miracle. Relief from Sāñchī.

Bottom left: The Buddha (the empty seat behind the flame) is taming the fierce Nāga serpent king (the five-headed cobra) dwelling in the fire-house of the ascetics by countering his fire with fire, which is coming out of the windows in the roof of the room. On the front left the ascetics are plunging into the river during the cold season as an ascetic practice. The Buddha created 500 fire vessels for them to warm themselves after emerging from the water. In the centre front are buffaloes, an elephant, and sacrificial ladles and a pot, which might depict the sacrifice ordered by Uruvelakassapa, who is depicted on the right sitting in his hut giving orders. Relief from Sāñchī.

Bottom left: Cremation heap on the dry river bed. *Bottom right:* Dry river bed where human corpses are cremated with Sitakund Hill on the background.

Pragbodhi

Plate XIX

Top: Pragbodhi Hill range. *Bottom:* Beggars on the path to the cave.

Plate XX

Top: The entrance to the cave. *Centre left:* Tibetan devotee offering lamps. *Centre right:* Statue of starving Bodhisattva in the cave. *Bottom left:* Entrance to the Tibetan temple. *Bottom right:* Hanuman monkey.

Sārnāth

Plate XXI

Top left: Remains of the Mūlagandhakuti. *Top right:* Tibetan Pilgrims circambulating the Dharmek Stupa. *Centre left:* Thai pilgrims sticking gold on the wall of the Mūlagandhakuti. The sticking of gold on Buddha statues and other sacred objects is considered a meritorious practice in Thailand and Burma. *Bottom left:* Dharmek Stupa.

Bottom right: Early depiction of the Dharmarājika Stupa with the Asoka pillar on the left. From a Bhārhut Stupa relief in the Indian Museum in Kolkata.

Plate XXII

Top left: Broken Asoka Pillar. *Top right:* Inscription of King Asoka on the pillar. *Centre left Top:* Votive stupas. *Centre left:* Early morning view over the ruins and grounds. Workmen are cleaning the ruins. *Centre right:* Buddha statue in a votive stupa. *Bottom:* Relief on Dharmek Stupa.

Rājgir

Plate XXIII

Top: Mūlagandha Kuti, Gijjhakuta. Bottom. Tibetan prayer flags near cave on Gijjhakuta.

Plate XXIV

Top left: A cave on Gijjhakuta. *Below this:* Tibetans devotees inside the Boar's Cave. *Top right:* Gijjhakuta with the Shanti Stupa on top. *Centre left:* Thai monks doing early morning recitation at the Mūlagandhakuti. *Centre right:* Mūlagandhakuti, midday. *Bottom left:* Ajātasattu's Cetiya.

Bottom right: Meditating monk in a cave on Gijjhakuta.

Plate XXV

Top left: Tetrawa Buddha statue. To right: Kuti at Gijjhakuta. Notice the cetiya on the peak in the background. *Centre left:* Sitting Buddha statue near Jethian Stupa B. *Centre centre:* View from inside the Indasala Cave *Centre left:* Plaque from Amarāvatī depicting (left) the mad tusker elephant

Nālagiri storming towards the Buddha and (right) the Buddha subduing Nālagiri. The onlooker in the right window of the building above might be Devadatta or Ajātasattu. *Bottom left:* Tapodārāma, with on the background the Pipphali cave. *Bottom right:* Locals bathing in the hotsprings of the Tapodārāma.

Plate XXVI

Top left: Sonbhandar's Cave. *Top right:* Chariot tracks. *Centre left:* Veluvana, the Bamboo Grove. *Centre right:* Old city walls. *Bottom:* Shanti Stupa, the Japanese Peace Pagoda.

Nālandā

Plate XXVII

Top left: Overview with Sāriputta Stupa on background. *Top right:* Tower at Temple Site 3 with stucco Buddha images. Votive stupas on foreground. *Centre left:* Entrance way. *Centre right:* Sāriputta Stupa with on the fourground a modle of what it originally looked like.
Bottom left: Pillars. *Lower centre:* Stucco Bodhisattva.

Plate XXVIII

Top left: Stairway leading up to Sāriputta Stupa. *Top right:* Votive stupas. *Centre left:* Buddha image in tower. *Bottom left:* Monks' cells in monastery. *Bottom right:* Tower with votive stupas.

Patna

Plates XXIX–XXX

Scenery in Northern India

Campā & Jahangira

Plate XXXI

Top: Queen Gaggarā's Lotus Pond. *Bottom:* Ruins of Vickramasīla Monastery.

Plate XXXII

Top left: Statues of Bodhisattvas carved in the rocks. Inset: The Buddha's footprints. *Top right:* Buddha image carved out in one of the Boulders. The sitting devotee to the left might be the sponsor of the image. *Centre left:* A British railway engineer with statues discovered in 1862 while dismounting a large brick mount at Sultanganj in order to get ballast for the nearby railway line which was under construction. The large Gupta style standing Buddha statue (centre), made out of bronze in the 5th–6th century, barely escaped the melting pot and was given by a Birmingham metal manufacturer to the Birmingham Museum, where it is one of the major items on display. With its 2.3 metres height and 500 kgs weight, it is the largest metal statue of its kind. *Bottom:* Drawing of Jahangira Island called *S.W. view of the Fakir's Rock in the River Ganges,* near Sultanganj (Bihar)." Pencil and wash drawing by Thomas Daniell, October 1788. Notice the statues on the boulders.

Vesālī

Plate XXXIII

Lion's pillar.

Plate XXXIV

Top: Stupa and Lion's Pillar. *Bottom right:* Japanese Peace Pagoda. *Bottom left:* Lion on Asoka Pillar.

Kesariya

Plate XXXV

Top: Kesariya Stupa. (On a day that a political rally was held nearby.) *Centre left:* View of stupa. *Centre right:* Thai monks worshipping an image on the stupa. *Bottom right:* View from the stupa.

Kosambī

Plate XXXVI

Top: Asoka's Pillar. *Bottom:* Ruins of Ghositārāma.

Gurpa & Lauriya Nandagar

Plate XXXVII

Gurpa hill.

Plate XXXVIII

Top & Centre right: Asoka Pillar with lion. *Centre Left & Bottom:* Great Stupa.

Barabar

Plate XXXIX

Top: Lomās Rishi Cave. (Picture by Tim Makins, www.mapability.com/blogs). *Centre left:* Sudamma Cave. *Centre right:* Polished interior of Lomās Rishi Cave. (Picture by Tim Makins) *Bottom left:* View from top mountain, with Shiva lingam shrine. (Picture by Tim Makins.) *Bottom Centre:* Arial picture of the rock with the Lomās Rishi Cave. (Picture by Tim Makins.) *Bottom right:* Kawodil Hill Buddha image.

Plate XL

Top: Landscape near Bodhgayā. *Bottom:* Cow-caravan on a rural road in Bihar.

Sāvatthī

Plate XLI

Top: Ānanda Bodhi Tree. *Centre left:* Painting at the Nava Jetavana Vihāra. The planting of the Ānanda Bodhi tree. *Centre right:* View from the stupa where the twin miracle took place. *Bottom left.* Bhārhut plaque at the Indian Museum, Kolkata, depicting Anāthapindika (standing in front) ordering the ground of Prince Jeta's park (Jetavana) to be covered with

gold (right), which has been unloaded from a bullock cart, and then acquiring the grove from Prince Jeta who is holding the water pitcher to pour water over the hand of Anāthapiṇḍika in order to ceremonially fulfil the donation (centre). The two buildings are the Kosamba Kuti (in front) next to a mango tree (*amba*) in a railing, and the Gandha Kuti (back). One onlooker on the left is waving his garment and whistling (?) as a sign of joy and amazement. *Bottom right:* View from Mūlagandha Kuti.

Plate XLII

Top: The remains of Mūlagandha Kuti. *Centre left.* Kacchi Stupa, which the Archeological Survey of India indentifies as the Sudatta Stupa, i.e. the Stupa of Anāthapindika. *Centre right:* Indian ascetic begging near Vesālī in front of a broken pillar, which might be an Asoka pillar.
Bottom left and centre: Buddha image at Thai temple. *Bottom right:* Bhārhut Stupa relief depicting King Pasenadi, the King of Kosala, leaving his palace in Sāvatthī on a chariot to go and see the Buddha, who is depicted by the Wheel of Dhamma. This scene might be depicting the Dhammacetiya Sutta, the "Monuments of the Dhamma Discourse" (Majjhima Nikāya Sutta 89), which relates how King Pasenadi visits the Buddha and praises the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Kusināra

Plate XLIII

The recumbent Buddha statue in the Nirvāna Temple. *bottom left.* Mourning figure, from the base of the recumbent statue.

Plate XLIV

The Nirvāna Temple and Nirvāna Stupa.

Plate XLV

Top left: Buddhist monk circumbulating a stupa in the Jetavana. *Bottom left:* The earth-witnessing Buddha image in the Matha Kaur Shrine. *Top right:* Meditating monk, probably Anuruddha who was witnessing with his psychic powers the Buddha attaining Parinibbāna. From the centre of the base recumbent Buddha statue shown on the previous page. *Centre and Bottom right:* Images from the Indian Museum depicting the Parinibbāna of the Buddha. The clouds with the hands holding cymbal (left) and drum (right) depict the sound of thunder which was heard after the passing away of the Buddha. The central, naked figure on the base holding his arms up, perhaps a monkey or a naked ascetic, is a meditating monk on the present image. The stupa might be the stupa with the ashes of the Buddha at Kusināra.

Plate XLVI

The recumbent Buddha statue in the Nirvāna Temple.

Of Related Interest

Sacred Island

Ven. S. Dhammika

This guidebook is meant primarily for Buddhists or those interested in Buddhism who wish to explore Sri Lanka's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of the Island, the author weaves together archaeological findings, art history and the stories and legends of the Theravadin tradition to bring to life thirty three places of religious significance. He also offers practical advice to how to travel in Sri Lanka and what the visitor can do to learn more about Buddhism and meditation.

BP612 237 pp.

The Buddha and his Disciples

S. Dhammika

In this book the life the Buddha is explored through the perspective of his interactions with his disciples and contemporaries, using society of the time as background. An accessible work especially suited for young people and newcomers to Buddhism.

BP 423S 114 pp.

The Life of the Buddha

According to the Pali Canon

Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli

Among the numerous lives of the Buddha, this volume may well claim a place of its own. Composed entirely from texts of the Pali Canon, the oldest authentic record, it portrays an image of the Buddha which is vivid, warm, and moving. Chapters on the Buddha's personality and doctrine are especially illuminating, and the translation is marked by lucidity and dignity throughout.

BP 101S 379 pp.

Prices according to latest catalogue (http://www.bps.lk)

THE BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for all people.

Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's dis-courses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is—a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

For more information about the BPS and our publications, please visit our website, or contact:

Administrative Secretary
Buddhist Publication Society
P.O. Box 61
54 Sangharaja Mawatha
Kandy • Sri Lanka

E-mail: bps@bps.lk
web site: http://www.bps.lk
Tel: 0094 81 223 7283 • Fax: 0094 81 222 3679

Buddhism/Travel BP 609S

Middle Land Middle Way

Just before the Buddha attained final Nirvana he urged his disciples to visit, at least once in their lives, the places where the most important events in his career occurred. In the centuries since then pilgrims from all over the Buddhist world have endured danger and hardship to come to India to see the places made sacred by the Buddha's presence. *Middle Land Middle Way* is the first comprehensive guidebook for the modern pilgrim wishing to undertake a pilgrimage. In the introduction the author gives an inspiring account of the significance and history of pilgrimage in Buddhism, as well as the biographies of famous pilgrims of the past. Then nineteen major and eleven minor places are covered, the Buddha's association with each, their subsequent history and a detailed and informative description of the monuments found there. With its useful, accurate and up-to-date information *Middle Land Middle Way* is now rightly considered the definitive guide book for Buddhist pilgrims in India.

Venerable Shravasti Dhammika was born in Australia, ordained as a monk in India in 1976 and since then has lived mainly in Sri Lanka and Singapore. He has a deep interest in archaeology and has explored numerous ancient Buddhist sites in India. Venerable Dhammika's other books published by the Buddhist Publication Society include *Gemstones of the Good Dhamma, Matrceta's Hymn to the Buddha, The Edicts of King Asoka, The Golden Goose and other Jataka Stories* and *Sacred Island–A Buddhist Pilgrim's Guide to Sri Lanka.*

BPS

Buddhist Publication Society Inc.
P.O. Box 61, 54 Sangharaja Mawatha
Kandy, Sri Lanka
Tel: +94 81 2237283 Fax: +94 81 2223679
E mail: bps@sltnet.lk
Website: http://www.bps.lk

ISBN 978-955-24-0197-8